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MY TEACHER,

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F R Hist S , I E S

ORIGIN AND GROWTH
OF
CASTE IN INDIA

BY

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VOLUME I

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PREFACE

Caste is the main basis of the present Hindu so(and nobody can properly understand the Hindu law social institutions without a good knowledge of the sy of caste and the rules concerning it. A systematic comprehensive history of caste is needed not only to e1 the non-Hindus to understand with sympathetic int in what respects and how the Indian social institut simple and normal in the beginning, have grad received a peculiar stamp which distinguishes Hindu] from the outside world but also to make the ordi Hindus realise that their society, unchanging anc changeable as it seems at present, has grown from p tive beginnings and has moved on with times in agree with certain recognised laws of evolution, and that 1 customs which they now regard as strange and alien been once followed by their ancestors and have grad taken their present shape through changed circumsta and new influences.

Since the institution of the census and the public of the first census reports in India in the last quart(the 19th century there has grown up a vast literature ing with the characteristics and functions of caste and cussing and speculating from an anthropological poi view about the origin of this interesting and com system. Moreover, some writers, in dealing with history of Sanskrit literature and of Indian religions, touched upon facts in connection with the rules of so far as they come within the purview of their subject-matters. But it has not been necessary for 1 to treat the subject of caste exhaustively on a histc basis in a book of literary or religious history whe

which seek to concentrate upon the social side of the history of India, but in most cases they dwell on certain periods of history or certain aspects of the system, and do not give a connected history of the development of caste institutions through various influences and under various circumstances from the nebular stage to the state of their fullest maturity as represented in the modern Hindu society. Again, the modern writers on Hindu law have often to draw upon old materials to formulate opinions upon existing usages in society, but they generally confine themselves to the later stages of caste-history when the caste-rules had been fully developed and codified

The purpose of this book is to present a systematic and comprehensive history of caste and caste-rules tracing as far as possible the successive stages of development from the early Vedic age to recent times, and also the fundamental principles of social psychology which have been at work behind the apparently diverse and sometimes inexplicable manifestions of caste-spirit with regard to the various institutions of Hindu society. In this first volume the history has been brought down to B. C. 300, by which date the caste-rules had in their main outlines assumed their present shape, but had at the same time not been influenced by the spread of Buddhistic principles and the clash with foreign ideas in Maurya and post-Maurya times.

For the information of the non-Sanskritist readers of this volume it may be stated that the Vedic age is divided chronologically into three periods, viz. (1) the Mantra period when the hymns and prayers contained in the Vedic Samhitas, principally the Rigveda, were composed ; (2) the Brahmana period when the hymns were classified, and elaborate commentaries were made containing practical sacrificial directions, exegetical and mythological explanations, and theological or philosophical speculations on the nature of things ; (3) the Sutra period when the rules of sacrifice and domestic ceremonial, customary law,

and even the literature of the various sciences were systematised and compressed like algebraic formulas with a view to their better preservation in memory. In later times when writing came into greater use and the cryptic language of the Sutras became liable to misunderstanding many of the Sutra works, especially those relating to laws and usages, were dressed up anew in clear versified language and with necessary additions and alterations to make them up to date. It must be admitted that there were some overlappings of these periods and that sometimes later compositions were given the appearance and style of an earlier period, like new wine in old bottle to deceive consumers. Besides, interpolations sometimes found their way into old writings to suit the ideas and interests of later commentators and copyists. In many cases it has been possible to detect and check these irregularities, while there are books and passages in books about whose antiquity and genuineness one can reasonably express doubt but not state a definite opinion. Without the intention of entering into a discussion over such matters with philologists, I have tried to avoid as much as possible relying upon the evidence of a single book or of a single passage to arrive at a conclusion, but have followed the general trend of the literature of a particular period.

In this connexion it may be mentioned that I have not dealt with Manu, Vishnu, etc., as if they were persons, who wrote the books named after them. Manu is to me the impersonation of the opinions contained in the book called Manusamhita. It is immaterial for the purpose of this book whether any person of this name existed or not, and whether the present law-book of Manu is only a revised version of an older work. When I say that the time of Manu is between B. C. 200 and A. D. 200, I mean that the composition of Manusamhita in its present form took place sometime during this period.

It has not been possible to make greater use of the

Epic materials in view of the uncertainty of their age While many of the Epic characters and events, no doubt, are of the remote past, of the Rigvedic and even of the pre-Rigvedic period, the language and ideas of the bulk of the Mahabharata and Ramayana are later than those of the Sutra works. The date of Kurukshetra must fall within the Brahmana period. So it is difficult to assign the name of Epic age to any particular period of Indian history, as is done by some orthodox writers.

This book has not been written with the object of propaganda or advocacy for this or that cause. The facts are collected, systematically arranged and presented for the enlightenment of the reader, and the task of the historian is over. It is superfluous to point out that the remarks and observations in this volume are made with reference to the facts under discussion only for the period dealt with. Food and marriage questions being the main factors of the present-day caste system cannot but receive a large share of attention in a book of this nature.

I must acknowledge my debt of gratitude to the great scholars, living or dead, like Weber, Muir, Max Muller, Buhler, Oldenberg, Jolly, Griffith, Wilson and others, whose interpretations and renderings of many Sanskrit passages I have accepted in this book with or without modifications.

Calcutta,
December, 1930. N. K. D.

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CHAPTER I

THE CASTE SYSTEM

Definition

The word Caste (from Latin *castus*, pure) was loosely used by the Portuguese to denote the Indian social classification as they thought that the system was intended to preserve purity of blood.

The system is such a peculiar and complex thing that no satisfactory definition is possible. Hence we find no unanimity among scholars on the subject. Senart states that "a caste is a close corporation, exclusive and, in theory at any rate, rigorously hereditary. It is equipped with a certain traditional and independent organization, including a chief and a council; meeting on occasion in assemblies endowed with more or less full authority. Often united in the celebration of certain festivals, it is further bound together by common occupation and by the practice of common customs which relate more particularly to marriage, food and questions of ceremonial pollution. Finally, it rules its members by the exercise of a jurisdiction the extent of which is fairly wide and which by the sanction of certain penalties, especially of exclusion, either absolute or revocable, from the group, succeeds in enforcing the authority of the community."

According to Sir H. Risley, "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give opinion as forming a single homogeneous community. The name generally denotes or is associated with a specific occupation. A caste is almost invariably endogamous in the sense that a member of the large circle denoted by the common name may not marry outside that circle, but within the circle there are usually a number of smaller circles each of which is also endogamous."

Sir E. A. Gait observes that "the main characteristics of a caste are the belief in a common origin held by all the members and the possession of the traditional occupation. It may be defined as an endogamous group or collection of such groups bearing a common name, having the same traditional occupation, claiming descent from the same source, and commonly regarded as forming a single homogeneous community."

Ketkar in his History of Caste defines a caste as "a social group having two characteristics: (1) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (2) the members are forbidden

by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group. Each one of such groups has a special name by which it is called. Several of such small aggregates are grouped together under a common name, while these larger groups are but subdivisions of groups still larger which have independent names."

Without attempting to make a comprehensive definition it may be stated that the most apparent features of the present day caste system are that the members of the different castes can not have matrimonial connections with any but persons of their own caste ; that there are restrictions, though not so rigid as in the matter of marriage, about a member of one caste eating and drinking with that of a different caste ; that in many cases there are fixed occupations for different castes; that there is some hierarchical gradation among the castes, the most recognised position being that of the Brahmans at the top; that birth alone decides a man's connection with his caste for life, unless expelled for violation of his caste rules, and that transition from one caste to another, high or low, is not possible. The prestige of the Brahman caste is the corner-stone of the whole organisation.

According to some estimate there are at present more than 3000 castes in India greatly varying in size, some castes confined to a few

score men, while some others claiming millions of members.*

Traditional Origin of Varnas

According to the most prevalent belief the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are said to have been separately created from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet respectively of the Creator. The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs is the Purusha Sukta (90.12) of the tenth book of the Rigveda, though the representation there is somewhat vague. The idea gains wide circulation in the Dharmasastras and the Puranas, and Manu accepts it without questioning in I. 31, which is often cited as an authoritative pronouncement on the subject. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that this was the only theory about the origin of the varnas among the writers of the sacred books of the Hindus. There are other theories as well, though they

* A good deal of confusion has arisen out of the indiscriminate use of the word caste to denote both Varna and Jati. Varna is not the same thing as jati, the former representing the fourfold division of society and the latter representing the smaller groups existing in society which the authors of the Dharmasastras seek to derive from one or other of the four varnas Manu distinctly says that there are only four varnas, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra, while he speaks of about fifty jatis, such as Ambastha, Chandala, Dravida, Yavana, etc. But even Manu (X. 31), not to speak of later writers, has confused jati with varna. The confusion is due to the fact that Brahman can be called both a varna and a jati, and so Sudra is also called a jati, though there are many jatis which are comprehended under the name Sudra, and a group cannot be found to-day which is known simply by the name of Sudra.

did not gain much circulation in later literatures and have consequently fallen into the background. Thus the varnas are variously said to have sprung from the words Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah (Satapatha Brahmana, II. 1, 4); from the three Vedas, Brahman from the Sama, Kshatriya from the Yajur, and Vaisya from the Rigveda (Taittiriya Brahmana, III. 12, 9); from different classes of gods and asuras (S. P. Br. XIV. 4, 2, 23); from the imperishable, the perishable and other principles (Harivamsa, 11816). Mankind is said to have been divided into four varnas according to qualities in the Treta age (Vayu Purana, IX. 161-165); or according to complexion, white, red, yellow, and black (Mahabharata, Santi, verses 6939-43). Again in various passages in the Brahmanas, the Epics and the Puranas the creation of man is described without the least allusion to any separate creation of the four varnas (e.g. S. P. Br. VII. 5, 2, 6; XIV. 4, 2, 1; Tait. S. VI. 5, 6, 1; Vishnu Pur. V. 33). Curiously, the verses of the book of Manu immediately succeeding the passage, which describes the creation of the different varnas from the different parts of the body of the Creator, contain another and more elaborate story of the creation of mankind without reference to castes by the ten primeval Rishis, Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Prachetas, Vasistha, Bhrigu and Narada (I. 32-41). In several Puranas (Vishnu Pur. IV; Bhag. Pur. IX) it

is stated that the descendants of some of the sons of Manu belonged to the four different varnas. It is thus seen that inspite of the popularity of the Purusha theory of the origin of varnas in later times, the sacred books give different and often contradictory and fanciful accounts of the origin of varnas and exhibit the greatest varieties of speculation on the subject.

Traditional Origin of Jatis

According to Manu, the four original varnas were created from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet respectively of Brahma. Then many castes or jatis were produced by a series of crosses first between members of the four varnas and then between the descendants of these initial unions. Thus arose 1. Murdha-vasikta (Brahman and Kshatriya). 2. Mahishya (Kshatriya and Vaisya). 3. Karana (Vaisya and Sudra). 4. Ambastha (Brahman and Vaisya). 5 Nishada or Parasava (Brahman and Sudra). 6. Ugra (Kshatriya and Sudra). 7. Suta (Kshatriya and Brahman). 8. Magadha (Vaisya and Kshatriya). 9. Vaideha (Vaisya and Brahman). 10. Ayogava (Sudra and Vaisya). 11. Kshattri (Sudra and Kshatriya). 12. Chandala (Sudra and Brahman). 13. Avrita (Brahman and Ugra). 14. Abhira (Brahman and Ambastha). 15. Dhigvana (Brahman and Ayogava). 16. Pukkasa (Nishada and Sudra). 17. Kukkutaka (Sudra and Nishada). 18. Svapaka (Kshattri and Ugra). 19. Vena

(Vaideha and Ambastha). 20. Sairindhra (Dasyu and Ayogava). 21. Maitreyaka (Vaideha and Ayogava). 22. Margava or Kaivarta or Dasa (Nishada and Ayogava). 23. Karavara (Nishada and Vaideha). 24. Meda (Vaideha and Nishada). 25. Andhra (Vaideha and Karavara). 26. Pandusopaka (Chandala and Vaideha). 27. Ahindika (Nishada and Vaideha). 28. Sopaka (Chandala and Pukkasa). 29. Antyavasayin (Chandala and Nishada).*

Secondly, many castes were formed by degradation from the original varnas on

* The list of mixed castes with their origins is not the same in all the law-books. Thus the first three castes, which, according to many writers, were produced by mixed unions, are not mentioned by Manu, because he observes that "the sons begotten by twice-born men on wives of the next lower castes are similar to their fathers," and hence do not form new castes (X. 6). It is needless to multiply such instances. As an extreme case of divergence from Manu's list the following may be cited from the Brihaddharmapurana (Ch. 13): Karana (Vaisya + Sudra); Ambastha, Dealer in perfumes, Brassware-manufacturer and Manufacturer of conchshell articles (Brahman + Vaisya); Ugra and Rajput (Kshatriya + Vaisya); Potter and Weaver (Brahman + Kshatriya); Blacksmith and Dasa (Sudra + Vaisya); Magadha and Gopa (Vaisya + Kshatriya); Barber and Confectioner (Kshatriya + Sudra); Betel-dealer (Brahman + Sudra); Suta and Malakara (Kshatriya + Brahman); Tambuli and Taulika (Vaisya + Brahman); Taksha and Washerman (Karana + Vaisya); Suvarnabanik (Ambastha + Vaisya); Abhira and Oilman (Gopa + Vaisya); Fisherman and Wine merchant (Gopa + Sudra); Nata (Malakara + Sudra); Sekharajalika (Magadha + Sudra); Kuraba (Suvarnabanik + Vaidya or Ambastha); Chandala (Sudra + Brahman); Varura (Abhira + Gopa); Cobbler (Taksha + Vaisya); Bell-ringer (Washerman + Vaisya); Palanquin-bearer (Oilman + Vaisya); Malla (Fisherman + Sudra)

account of non-observance of sacred rites. These are called Vratyas. Thus Vratya Brahmanas were known as 1. Bhrijjakantaka, 2. Avantya, 3. Vatadhana, 4. Pushpadha, and 5. Saikha. Vratya or degraded Kshatriyas became 1. Jhalla, 2. Malla, 3. Lichchhivi, 4. Nata, 5. Karana, 6. Khasa, 7. Dravida, 8. Paundraka, 9. Odra, 10 Kamboja, 11. Yavana, 12. Saka, 13. Parada, 14. Pahlava, 15. China, 16. Kirata, 17. Darada. Degraded Vaisyas became 1. Sudhanvan, 2. Acharjya, 3. Karusha, 4. Vijanman, 5. Maitra, 6. Satvata.

Criticism of Manu's theory

On the face of it the theory seems to be highly fanciful and absurd. Firstly, it assumes that in one way or other the whole population of the world is descended from the four original varnas. Thus even foreign nations like China (Chinese), Yavana (Greek), Saka (Scythian), etc., are said to have been Kshatriyas at one time, but now degraded to a lower status because they have ceased to observe the prescribed sacraments. In other words, the Chinese, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Dravidians belong to the same stock as the Indian Kshatriyas, and are ethnically more closely related to them than the latter to the Indian Brahmans and Vaisyas. Secondly, castes which were compact tribes like the Andhras, castes which had developed out of trade guilds like the Ambasthas, castes

which represented the distinction between different classes of labour, between fishing and hunting, agriculture and handicrafts, are all supposed to have been produced by inter-breeding. Thirdly, there is a great divergence of opinion among the writers of law-books about the names of the castes produced by mixed unions, which only proves what a large part was played by fancy and imagination in the derivation and tabulation of the so-called "mixed" castes What are we to believe when we find, for instance, the Nishadas being called an original caste, "the fifth varna" (Yaska, Nirukta III. 8); being supposed to have been produced from the body of Vena, according to Vishnu Purana I. 13 and Harivamsa V; and being derived from the union between Brahman and Sudra, as in Manu (X. 8)?

Risley (The People of India, pp. 70-92) has observed several processes by which castes are formed besides those mentioned by Manu. Thus (1) a whole tribe of aborigines, or a large section of a tribe, enrol themselves in the ranks of Hinduism either under their own tribal designation or under a new caste-name which can be easily distinguished from those of the standard castes, e.g. the Rajbanshis of North Bengal, the Bhumij of West Bengal, the Gonds of Central India.

(2) "The functional or occupational type of caste is so numerous and so widely diffused

and its characteristics are so prominent that community of function is ordinarily regarded as the chief factor in the evolution of caste. Whatever the original impulse may have been, it is a matter of observation at the present day that not only almost every caste professes to have a traditional occupation, though many of its members have abandoned it, but that the adoption of new occupations or of changes in the original occupation may give rise to sub-divisions of the caste which ultimately develop into entirely distinct castes." The Sadgopas, or those milkmen who have taken to agriculture, the Madhunapits, or those barbers who have become confectioners, the Chasadhobas, or the washermen who have become agriculturists, offer illustrations of new castes being formed by changes of occupation.

(3) "The sectarian type comprises a small number of castes which commenced life as religious sects founded by philanthropic enthusiasts, who having evolved some metaphysical formula offering a speedier release from the cycle of births and the law of karma had further persuaded themselves that all men were equal, or at any rate that all believers in their teachings ought to be equal"; e.g. the Lingayats (though there is a tendency among them to reorganize themselves on the lines of ordinary caste system), the Jat Vaishnabas of Bengal, the Sikhs (if they can be called Hindus).

(4) "Castes of the national type.—There exist certain groups, usually regarded as castes at the present day, which cherish traditions of bygone sovereignty and seem to preserve traces of an organization considerably more elaborate than that of an ordinary tribe." The Newars of Nepal and the Mahratta-Kunbis may be taken as examples of such a survival.

(5) "Castes formed by migration.—If members of a caste leave their original habitat and settle permanently in another part of India, the tendency is for them to be separated from the parent group and to develop into a distinct caste." Thus the Rarhi and Varendra Brahmans of Bengal, the Gour Brahmans, the Dravid Brahmans, etc., though subcastes of the Brahman stock, are to all intents and purposes separate castes so far as the rights of connubium and commensality are concerned.

(6) "Castes formed by changes of custom. —The formation of new castes as a consequence of the neglect of established usage or the adoption of new ceremonial practices or secular occupation has been a familiar incident of the caste system from the earliest times." Thus the Ajodhya Kurmis of Behar and the Kanaujia Kurmis of the U. P. pride themselves on their prohibiting the remarriage of widows, and have attained a higher rank in the estimation of the Brahmans than ordinary Kurmis. On the other hand, the Gauria

Rajputs of Gurgaon and Delhi lost connection with the other Rajputs since they took to widow-remarriage.

Justification of Manu

Yet it will not do to reject Manu's views as absolutely stupid and nonsensical. That new social groups are produced by inter-tribal marriages can still be observed among some of the aboriginal tribes in India, though the process has ceased to work among the orthodox Hindus, except in small isolated cases like the Shagirdpeshas, who are the illegitimate children of Bengalee settlers and Oriya women, and the Khasas of Nepal, who are the offspring of mixed marriages between Rajput or Brahman immigrants and the Mongolian women of the country. Thus we find such endogamous groups as Mahili-Munda, Nagbansi-Munda, Oraon-Munda, etc., formed by intermarriages between Munda men and women of other tribes. The fault of Manu was that he observed this process only, and sought to explain the formation of more than half the social divisions known to him by this process alone. In this connexion it may be stated that he is not the first man to derive so many castes from the four original varnas by the process of intermarriage, as before him Baudhayana, Vasistha and Gautama wrote on it, though they did not go to such absurd length.

Again in order to understand Manu's views properly with regard to the seemingly fanciful theory of the origin of even foreign races like the Chinese, Greeks and Scythians by degradation from the Kshatriya varna, we must take into consideration the condition of the world at the time when Manu wrote (between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D). The first thing to remember is that almost all the religions of the world were idolatrous, that Judaism or Christianity was not much known. Among those religions, though the names of gods and ceremonial rites might be different among different peoples, there was an underlying community, which could justify the Indians of Manu's time in believing that theirs was the one and eternal religion, other religions being only variants or corruptions thereof. There were hundreds of gods in the Hindu pantheon, and the addition of some new gods from foreign religions, or the adoption of some of them by a foreign people, was not regarded as revolutionary by either, especially when many of the gods whether in India or abroad were nature gods. There was no such bitter religious difference at that time as we now find between Hinduism and Mahomedanism, or Mahomedanism and Christianity. Similarly, the difference of race was unknown There might have been some racial struggle between the Aryan and the Dasa in the Vedic age, but by the time of Manu all

memories of that struggle had been lost. The word Arya is not used in the literature of the time to denote a particular race, but is generally applied to those who practised the Vedic rites, or were honourable. There were no acknowledged differences between an Indian and a Chinese or a Greek, and if the latter consented to respect the Brahmans and practise Brahmanical rites he might be given a place in the society and called an Arya. Difference of language, too, was of no account. Thus Manu says that men belonging to the four varnas, who are degraded for neglect of sacred rites, whether speaking Sanskrit or Mlechchha or barbarian tongue, are called Dasyus (X. 45). Under these circumstances it was not unnatural for Manu and other sacred writers to regard the whole mankind as belonging to one community and to determine the social status of the various tribes and nations according to their conduct and respect for the Vedic rites. Thus the martial and ruling races like the Yavanas, Sakas, etc. were assigned the status of Kshatriya, but as they did not properly follow the usages of the Sanatana Dharma, or the Eternal Religion, they were called Vratya or degraded Kshatriyas. If any of them chose to fully adopt the Hindu ceremonial, the stigma would have been removed, and the party given an equal status with the existing Kshatriya groups.

This gives us a clue to the success of Hinduism in keeping a firm hold upon the heterogeneous elements of the Indian population and its wonderful power of absorbing alien races and cultures, though apparently it is not a proselytising religion. The Brahmans would not regard any foreign religion as antagonistic to their own. They would say to the foreigners that their religions were only varieties of the one eternal religion, Brahmanism, and that they belonged to one or other of the four varnas into which the whole mankind was supposed to be divided. Those who would not care anything for Brahmanical usages were called Mlechchhas or Dasyus and were let alone. But those who felt any the least respect for the Brahmanical institutions were told that their status in society, that is, the estimation in which they would be regarded by the Brahmans, would depend entirely upon the greater or less strictness with which they followed the teachings of the Sastras. No force was applied or even necessary. Unconsciously and imperceptibly the alien barbarians would be tempted by the unfailing bait of higher social status to give up their old practices and conform more and more to the Brahmanical usages. It is only when the tolerant and pliable Hinduism met the iconoclastic and anti-hierarchical creed of Islam that its progress was checked, and those very means which so long acted like the hands

of an octopus turned against itself and began to tear its own vitals

Risley's theory on Varna division

Risley states, "Assuming that the writers of the law books had before their eyes the same kind of social chaos that exists now, the first question that occurs to one is :—From what source did they derive the theory of the four castes? . . . . it is possible that the Brahmanical theory of castes may be nothing more than a modified version of the division of society into four classes—priests, warriors, cultivators and artisans—which appears in the sacerdotal literature of ancient Persia. . . It is not suggested that the Iranian legend of four classes formed part of the stock of tradition that the Aryans brought with them into India. Had this been so, the myth relating to their origin would have figured prominently in the Vedas, and would not have appeared solely in the Purusha Sukta, which most critics agree in regarding as a modern interpolation. The conjecture is that the relatively modern compilers of the law books, having become acquainted with the Iranian legend, were fascinated by its assertion of priestly supremacy, and made use of it as the basis of the theory by which they attempted to explain the manifold complexities of the caste system."

Risley is wrong in supposing that the Purusha hymn is a modern interpolation.

The utmost that can be said is that the date of this hymn is later than that of the bulk of the Rigveda. Even without this hymn there are strong evidences to prove that the society had begun to be divided into castes or rather classes, Brahman, Rajanya and Vis, while the Indo-Aryans were still in the Punjab. It looks absurd that at a comparatively late date, when the society was sufficiently advanced, one or a few Brahman priests becoming acquainted with the Iranian custom palmed off a fiction on the entire Indian population to mould the society accordingly, and went to the length of making suitable interpolations in the earlier literature and scriptures.

Senart's theory

More reasonable than the theory of Risley is that of Senart about the origin of the caste system. In his opinion caste is the normal development of ancient Aryan institutions, which assumed a peculiar form because of the peculiar conditions in India. It is not difficult to assign the beginning of caste system in the shape of varna division to the Indo-Iranian period of history as the fourfold division of society is found both in the Avestan Persia and Rigvedic India. Thus in ancient Persia there were the Athravas (priests), Rathaesthas (warriors), Vastriya Fshuyants (cultivators), and Huitis (artisans). The only

important difference lay with regard to the fourth class, which was the artisan class in Persia, and the servile or Sudra class in India. But this difference is more apparent than real if we consider that the pursuit of handicrafts was mostly assigned to the slaves or Sudras in India. Senart, however, goes beyond the Indo-Iranian period to find out the beginning of the system. He observes the following points of similarity between the Indian system and the early Greek and Roman social institutions. Gens, curia, tribe at Rome; family, phratria, phyle in Greece; and family, gotra, jati in India. "The Gotra denotes an eponymous group which is reputed to descend in its entirety from a common ancestor, who should properly be a rishi, a legendary priest or saint." The Romans never married a woman of their own gens, and the Roman patricians like the Indian Brahmans enjoyed the hypergamous rights of marriage which were abolished after a long struggle by the Lex Caneulia. The issue of a mixed marriage took a lower rank than those of pure patrician descent. Strangers were not allowed at the sacrifice of the gens. The Indian custom of the transfer of the wife from her Gotra to that of her husband at the marriage had its parallel in the Roman confarreatio. In respect of marriage the Athenian group system presents striking resemblances to the Indian Gotra, and membership of a phratria was confined to the

children of the families comprising the group. There were restrictions even in the matter of eating with strangers. The family meal was regarded as sacred, and from the Roman charistia were excluded not only strangers but any members of the family who had degraded themselves by unworthy conduct. The Roman interdict aqua et igni is very similar to the Indian usage for expulsion from caste (Huka pani bandh). Even the Indian panchayat system has its parallel in the family councils, the patria potestas and the chief of the gens, whose rights of deciding family or communal cases were recognised by the state. From these Senart concludes that the leading principles and characteristics of the caste system formed part of a stock of usage and tradition common to all branches of the Aryan race. (Les Castes dans l'Inde III. 4).

Criticism of Senart's theory

The greatest importance is attached by Senart to the principle of exogamy or prohibition of marriage within one's Gotra as a fundamental basis of the Indian caste system and he traces it to the Indo-European period. It is difficult to agree with him, seeing that the rule forbidding marriage within the Gotra was not in existence among the Rigvedic Indians and that the beginnings of such a custom can be traced in the period of the Brahmanas only and that it was not till the Sutra period that we

find any strictness in its observance. From a study of the Vedic literature it is not possible to presume its existence with the Indo-Aryans from the earliest times. Besides, in India Gotra is only one of several kinds of exogamy, e.g. exogamy due to territorial vicinity, due to a common surname regarded as a sign of relationship, and above all, due to a common totem. Secondly, restriction on inter-caste or inter-class marriage seems to be practically unknown in the Rigvedic period, the only disapproval being with regard to marriages with the Sudra population, and in that case it was actuated more by racial and cultural hostilities than by any other motive peculiar to Indo-European mind. Thirdly, the idea of pollution by touch with lower classes and the prohibition of inter-caste dining were absent in the earlier Vedic period, and they, too, first appear in the period of the later Samhitas and Brahmanas in connexion with the non-Aryan Sudra. Fourthly, the division of society into classes and guilds to some extent hereditary in character is not a peculiar feature of the Indo-Iranian or Indo-European society. It is a natural product of the evolution of human society, especially when the king and the priests gather round themselves a kind of sanctity and divinity. Ancient Egypt, for instance, shows a division of the people very like that of the Indo-Iranians (Herodotus II. 164). Fifthly, Senart's thesis that "these

classes (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra) may be exceedingly ancient; it is only in later times that they have been superimposed on the castes; different by nature and origin, the true castes, or the organisms from which they sprang, were from the beginning more diverse and more numerous;" is not tenable. As will be shown in the succeeding chapters that many castes were formed by the splitting up of the four varnas along with those which were formed from tribal or national groups, but the motive spring of which was supplied by the varna system. Had there been no varna system there might have been tribal or totemestic groupings, and that also not among the more advanced sections of the people, but there would have been no caste system.

Colour question

What then were the peculiar conditions which helped the development of caste in India instead of nationalism as in Europe? The foremost is the extreme divergence of the two types, Aryan and non-Aryan, on the Indian soil, not only in culture and language but in physical characteristics, especially colour. There was little colour distinction between the Aryans and the non-Aryans in Europe. That the colour question was at the root of the varna system is apparent from the

Indians distinguished themselves from the non-Aryans in respect of colour. That class which retained the utmost purity of colour by avoiding intermixture naturally gained precedence in the social scale. The Brahmans were white, the Kshatriyas red, the Vaisyas because of large absorption of black blood were yellowish like the Mulattoes of America, and the Sudras black, as is described in the Mahabharata.

In the first stage the Indo-Aryans were divided into three orders or varnas. They had no scruple in marrying indiscriminately among themselves, while racial hatred made them avoid contact with the non-Aryan Sudras. The memory of this age is preserved in the Mahabbharata, Anushasana Parva, where it is stated that "the son of a Brahman by wives of the three varnas is a Brahman. Only four varnas are known to exist, a fifth does not exist." In other words, the son invariably belonged to the order of his father, whatever might be rank of his mother. Such a statement is not subscribed to by any of the Dharmasastras. As, however, the Vaisyas came into greater association with the Sudras and became more polluted with non-Aryan blood than the other two classes, aversion came to be felt towards the union in marriage with a Vaisya girl. This stage of caste development is represented in a sloka of the same

four wives of four orders of a Brahman, in the two higher he himself (i.e. a Brahman) is born, in the two lower less pure sons are born who belong to their mothers' varnas." This state of things evidently continued till about the time of Manu, who also does not assign a separate caste to the son of a Brahman father and Kshatriya mother. With the hardening of caste rules in course of time even this freedom was restricted. In the later Dharmasastras we find that none could become a Brahman who was not born of Brahman parentage on both sides. When the marriage with a Sudra woman was so much abhorred and blamed, we can easily conceive the horror and detestation which a Brahman in his racial pride would feel at the sight of a Brahman woman marrying a Sudra. No words are too strong to condemn such a marriage, and as a deterrent it is enacted that the issues of such union should occupy the humblest position in society, or rather live outside the society. Thus we see that the development of inter-caste marriage restrictions was principally due to the racial difference between the white conquerors and the black natives and the desire of the former to preserve their purity of blood.

Occupational basis of caste

According to some, common occupation or

This theory has found a most logical and dogmatic champion in Nesfield, who holds that occupation is the sole basis of caste and excludes all influence of race and religion from the origin and growth of the system. In his opinion caste originated in India long after the Aryan invaders had been absorbed in the mass of the native people and all racial distinction between the two sets of people, Aryan and aboriginal, had disappeared. Different occupations grouped together men from different tribes into guild castes, which then borrowed the principles of endogamy and prohibition of commensality from the customs of the old tribes and thereby solidified themselves into isolated units. The ranking of any caste as high or low depends upon whether the industry represented by the caste belongs to an advanced or backward stage of culture. Thus the castes following the most primitive occupations like hunting, fishing, basket-making, etc., are regarded as the lowest, the metal-workers, agriculturists, and traders are higher in rank, while the highest caste is of those who are priests and teachers. Lastly, Nesfield states that "the old four-fold varna division was never actually in force in India except as a current tradition, the only reality which attaches to it to this day." He rejects the statements and beliefs of the Brahmanical literature concerning the origin of caste and

and comes to his conclusions from a general observation of the subject from present day experience.

Criticism of Nesfield's theory

The first objection against this theory would be that it is not likely that the caste system originated at so late a date when the Aryans and the non-Aryans had been united into one people, and that at that time the Aryans were in a very backward stage of culture when the more advanced arts and industries were unknown among them. Secondly, this cause was present everywhere, both in India and Europe, but was too feeble to develop caste system anywhere else than in India. The Iranian division of society on the basis of occupation did not become permanent. The trade guilds of mediaeval Europe never developed into castes. Even the state-enforced division of work on hereditary principle by the Theodosian Code under the Roman Empire failed to generate caste. Moreover, if Nesfield's notion were correct, all men of one occupation, as for instance, cultivation, trade, weaving, ought to belong to the same caste, at least in one locality. But that is not the case. "Experience shows, on the contrary, how caste prejudices hold apart people who should be united by the samo occupation carried on in the same place. We have

only in the lower classes, but even in the highest. Nowhere is the abandonment of the dominant profession sufficient in itself to cause exclusion. Occupations are graded according to the degree of respect which they inspire, but the degrees are fixed by conceptions of religious purity. All trades not involving pollution, or at least enhancement of impurity, are open to every caste. Nesfield himself states that Brahmans may be found carrying on all trades 'except those which would entail ceremonial pollution and consequent loss of caste.' If the most despised castes multiply themselves into new sections who look down upon the primitive stock, it is not because these adopt a different profession, but merely because they renounce a certain detail of their hereditary occupations which, according to current prejudice, entails pollution. Certain groups of sweepers are in this position...To grant to community of trade a place among the motive-forces active in shaping the destiny of the caste is a very different matter from claiming it to be the all-sufficient origin of the system. The first proposition is obviously as reasonable as the second is inadmissible." (Senart).

In India this occupational cause of the origin of caste operated more strongly than elsewhere, because the Aryan conquerors left all work involving manual labour to be done

work came to be regarded as impure, the practice of which would lead to the degradation of the worker to the level of the slave. Thus the professions of the priest, the ruler, the trader were for the Aryans while those of the handicraftsmen, domestic servants and labourers were for the non-Aryans. Moreover, the Brahman ritualism became so complicated and the Brahmanic literature became so developed at a time when writing was not known to them and everything had to be preserved by memory alone that a special class of men were required for the purpose who could carry on the profession from father to son and who could improve their skill and mnemonical power by the adoption of strictly hereditary principle.

Tribal basis of caste

Tribalism is another important factor in the development of the caste system. In this matter the aborigines contributed more than the Aryans. "Savage nations are subdivided into an infinity of tribes which, bearing a cruel hatred towards each other, form no intermarriages, even when their language springs from the same root and only a small arm of a river, or a group of hills, separates their habitations." (Westermarck). The Aryans when they came into India had outgrown this stage of tribal endogamy, and so there was no possi-

developing into castes. From what we find among the non-Aryanised aborigines of India we can easily believe that the practices of totemistic exogamy and tribal endogamy were particularly strong among the Dravidian and Munda or Austro-Asiatic peoples of India, which kept the various tribes asunder like so many castes. This feature of social organisation is also observed among the aboriginal tribes of Australia, who are supposed to be somehow related to the Pre-Dravidians of India. Again, even before the coming of the Indo-Aryans, there had been great cultural differences among the natives of India, probably between the civilised Dravidians and the savage Pre-Dravidians, between men who dwelt in towns and forts and had well-developed political organisation and systematised creeds, and men who still dwelt in forests and caves, and had not advanced beyond the hunting and fishing stage of culture.* These

* The researches of scholars like Levi and Przyluski (Bagchi, *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India*) have sought to trace some Sanskrit words and place-names to Pre-Dravidian origin. Nothing has yet been adduced to prove that the Pre-Dravidians had "a civilisation which had its greatness." The list of words supposed to have been borrowed by Sanskrit from the Austric stock does not suggest a high level of their civilisation as most of them are the names of animals, fruits, primitive articles, and localities. Besides, doubts can be expressed with regard to many of these words as being of non-Aryan and non-Dravidian origin. The suggestion of Przyluski about the Austric origin of the Doms of modern India confirms the belief that the Pre-Dravidians are to be found in the

differences had raised a wall of separation between the two types, and each avoided contact with the other. These tribal and cultural divisions of society could not be shaken off by the natives even after their conquest by the Aryans, and under the changed circumstances they became hardened into caste divisions. Hence the curious fact that the caste rules are more rigid among the Dravidians of the south, not only between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans but between the various sections of the non-Brahmans, between the touchables and the untouchables, than among the more Aryan peoples of Northern India. Thus the practices of the conquered aborigines contributed as much to the development of caste as the racial and class prejudices of the Aryan conquerors.

Of late the view has been gaining ascendancy that the population of India being predominantly Dravidian and Munda in race, their influence upon Hindu culture and social organisation was very great, much greater than the orthodox Sanskritists would concede. This view has been strengthened by recent researches among the remains of pre-Hellenic Minoan or Cretan culture, which is now regarded as forming a substantial part of the

Whether in Australia, Malaya peninsula and islands, or in the Chota-Nagpur plateau of India, nowhere is any sign of a respectable culture and social organisation to be found among the modern representatives of the Austro-Asiatic race.

foundation of the early Hellenic culture. Moreover, it is unaccountable as to how the Indian Aryans came to have such a distinctive culture with the system of caste, doctrines of transmigration of soul, law of Karma, theory of illusion, etc., which they do not share with any other group of Aryan people in Europe and Asia. Theories about the identity of the Dravidians with the Sumerians and the increasing knowledge about the culture of the Sumerians in *Ur* and other ancient cities of Babylonia naturally lead to the imagination of a cultural conquest of the Aryan conquerors by the civilized Dravidians. Slater in his book, *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture*, contends that caste is Dravidian and that it was adopted by the semi-Dravidized Aryan conquerors of India. Similar theories about Dravidians becoming priests to the Aryans and forming the Brahman caste have been advanced by Pargiter in his *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*. A detailed criticism and refutation of Pargiter's theories has been made in the present writer's book, *The Aryanisation of India, Appendix II*, and need not be repeated here. Slater's data are not satisfactory and his arguments are not convincing. In the absence of any assured knowledge on our part of the conditions of India before the coming of the Aryans and of the Dravidian culture at an early date, say about B.C. 1000, we are not

in a position to gauge the extent of Dravidian influence upon Vedic culture and society. However alluring the subject may be, we would do well to await further light from the recent archæological discoveries in the valley of the Indus and the definite establishment of the identity of the Dravidians with the Sumerians. As regards the Pre-Dravidian influence upon the Aryans, as has been suggested by Levi, Przyluski and some other scholars, the chances of gaining light are poorer still. For the time being we shall have to remain satisfied with the view that the varna division of society was mainly Aryan in character, though accentuated by the peculiar conditions of the early Aryan conquerors in India, and that the formation of Jati castes, many of which were tribal in origin, together with some of the practices like untouchability, infant marriage, etc., was due largely to aboriginal influences.

Cosmopolitanism and Law of Karma

Thus we find that in India many tribes have developed into castes. But what prevented a similar development in Europe? The principal factor is the change from tribalism to territorialism of society in Europe, aided by the establishment of strong territorial governments, the enforcement of uniform laws and practices over all classes in a particular area, and the abolition of tribal

differences by a national or a credal religion. In India, on the other hand, there had been no political power which could draw the scattered groups or tribes together until the 5th century B.C., by which time caste rules had already become rigid. The Indian religion and social system were cosmopolitan and not national, the prevailing conception being that there is only one eternal religion, Brahmanism, the other religions of the world being only varieties or corruptions of the same, and that all the peoples of the world form one community divided into four varnas. Unlike in other countries, the Indian tribes and classes did not revolt against the hierarchical order or against the nature of their occupations, however mean, and this was due to the influence of the doctrine of metempsychosis, which assigns the work and status to every man according to the inexorable law of Karma, or action in previous lives. Thus even the most wretched man with his most degrading occupation remains satisfied with the belief that the miseries of his present life are the result of his sins in his previous life, and that if he submissively performs his caste duties in this life he will be born in a higher caste in the next life.

"The Hindu mind is both religious and speculative. It jealously upholds tradition and is singularly insensible to the joys of action and the call of material progress.

It offered largely a field for a social organisation composed of extremely archaic elements, and obedient to an all-potent sacerdotal authority which regarded immutability as a duty and the established hierarchy as a natural law. With striking aptness this system is particularly associated with the most permanent, if not the most characteristic, of the dogmas which dominate the religious life of India, namely, metempsychosis. The immobility of the limits which the caste imposes upon life is justified and explained automatically by a doctrine which founds the terrestrial condition of each individual on the balance of his previous actions, good and bad." (Senart).

Comparing the conditions of Ancient India and Mediaeval Europe which might foster the growth of caste, Romesh Chunder Dutt observes, "The clergy, the knighthood, and the people of Europe in the Middle Ages answered in some respects to the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas of India. But the resemblance is in appearance only. The clergy of Feudal Europe did not marry and its ranks were recruited from the ablest, the cleverest, the most learned among the people. ... The people too in the darkest days of feudal oppression had more of tough life and rude vigour than the passive and submissive citizens of the Gangetic plain. The people in Europe soon formed leagues to protect their

and the proud exclusiveness of the ruling class it contains the spirit of mediaeval guild system and feudalism; but in none of its aspects can it fit in with the modern conceptions of nation, state, democracy and individual liberty.

CHAPTER II

Caste in the Rigveda

(*c*. B.C. 2000—1400)*

Fourfold Division in the Rigveda

Brahmano' sya mukham asid bahu rajanyah kritah । *Uru tad asya yad vaisyah padbhyam sudro ajayata* ॥ (Rig. X. 90. 12). "The Brahman was his (Purusha's) mouth; the Rajanya was made his arms, the being (called) the Vaisya, he was his thighs; the Sudra sprang from his feet." On reading this hymn, the Magna Carta of the caste system, one gets an idea that the varna institutions were the same in the Rigvedic society as in that of the later law-books or the Dharmasastras and the Puranas, and hence the orthodox belief that the caste system had been in existence from the earliest times. But according to competent scholars the above Purusha hymn is a comparatively later composition and so does not represent the state of affairs prevailing during the greater part of the Rigvedic age. Earlier European scholars of the subject belittled the significance of the Purusha Sukta

* For a discussion of the chronology, vide the author's "Aryanisation of India" ch. iii.

representation, some even suggesting that the hymn was a later interpolation, and tried to show that the Rigvedic society was practically free from caste institutions, which according to them were a later development (Zimmer, Altindisches Leben, 185-203). The tendency of modern scholarship, however, is to concede a little more to the Indian orthodox views and to acknowledge the existence of caste, though not of a rigid type, even in the earlier part of the Rigvedic age. There are traces of the division of the people into brahma, kshatram, and visah in several passages besides the Purusha hymn, as in VIII. 35. 16—18, and even of fourfold division of society, as in 1. 113. 6: "One to high sway (i.e., Brahman), one to exalted glory (i.e., Kshatriya), one to pursue his gain (i.e., Vaisya), and one his labour (i.e., Sudra), all to regard their different vocations, all moving creatures hath the Dawn awakened." Haug thus expresses his views on the origin of Brahmanism: "It has been of late asserted that the original parts of the Vedas do not know the system of caste. But this conclusion was prematurely arrived at without sufficiently weighing the evidence. It is true the caste system is not to be found in such a developed state; the duties assigned to the several castes are not so clearly defined as in the law-books and Puranas. But nevertheless the system is already known in the earlier parts of the Vedas, or rather

presupposed. The barriers only were not so insurmountable as in later times."*

There are, however, some grounds for believing that the fourfold division of society can be traced to pre-Vedic times when the Iranian and Indian branches of the Aryan race had not separated. In the earliest Iranian society known to us there were four classes, viz., Athrava, Rathaestha, Vastriya Fshouyant and Huiti, corresponding to the Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra of the Indian society. The Athravas or priests in particular formed something like a caste. "They had their secrets which they were prohibited from divulging; they were the spiritual guides of their nation, and none but the son of a priest could become a priest, a rule which the Parsis still maintain." When we notice two such parallel institutions in the two countries in a high state of development we may expect to find the beginnings at the time when the two peoples lived together, as is the case with many of the religious ideas contained in the Rigveda having similarities in the Zend Avesta. Hence if we argue that caste in the sense of class distinction was unknown in the early part of the Rigvedic age we are bound to presume that the Aryans had at one time possessed such ideas, then lost them, and

* See also Oldenberg, Religion des Veda, 373 et seq, and Geldner, Vedische Studien II.

subsequently got them again in an inexplicable way.

Brahman or priestly class

The word Brahman in the neuter gender is generally used in the Rigveda to denote either a hymn or an author or reciter of hymn. Brahman in the masculine gender found only in a few places in the Rigveda appears at first to be equivalent to "the son of a Brahman," and then a priest. This, together with the use of the word Brahmaputra, son of a Brahman (II. 43. 2), seems to prove that by that time the function of a Brahman had already become a profession. "Various are the thoughts and endeavours of us different men. The carpenter seeks something broken, the physician a patient, the Brahman some one to offer sacrifices." (IX. 112.1). "The speaking Brahman (i.e., the priest who duly discharges the task of recitation for which he is engaged) earns more than the silent Brahman" (X. 117.7). In Rig. I. 164. 45 and X. 71. 8-9, a distinction is drawn between intelligent and unintelligent Brahmans, between those that intelligently performed their duties and those that mechanically carried on the ceremonial of worship without understanding the meaning. This certainly presupposes the existence of a sacerdotal class. It is wrong to think that the early Vedic religion consisted of simple rituals which did not require the services of a

professional priesthood, and which enabled the king himself to sacrifice as the high priest for his people, as is found in many of the ancient countries of the world. Even in the early Vedic age the ceremonial of worship had become so developed and complicated that different classes of priests, hota, pota, neshta, agnidha, prasasta, adhvaryu, brahma, were required for the proper performance of a sacrifice. Thus we read in Rig. II. 1. 2, "Thine, Agni, is the office of hota, thine the function of pota, thine the duty of neshta, thou art the agnidha of the sacrificer; thine is the office of the prasasta, thou doest the work of the adhvaryu, thou art the brahma and the lord of the house in our dwellings." There are references to sacrifices lasting for nine and ten months at a stretch (V. 45. 7 and 11). All these show that the priesthood had already become an hereditary profession and that their functions required considerable skill which could only be acquired by long training and practice.

"In so developed a condition of religious practice it is not surprising to find that the priests had already made themselves indispensable at the Srauta offerings: the householder might perform many of the domestic services himself, if he preferred to do so, and the poor man must have been in this position, but the Srauta sacrifices demanded a priest or often several priests. It is beyond doubt that

in the time of the Rigveda the priesthood was normally hereditary, we have no material for a history of the growth of the special connexion of the families mentioned in the Rigveda, such as Viswamitras, Vasisthas, Atris, Bharadvajas, with the sacrifice: we may assume that at a period when the simpler relations of life prevailed, some family became associated with the ritual through the skill of one of its members or some possession of unusual powers, but that period lies far behind the Rigveda, especially if we believe, as is quite possible, that a priesthood arose in the Indo-European period. But these families differ essentially in some respects from parallel institutions in other Indo-European lands, showing that the Indo-European idea of priesthood cannot have been highly developed. There is no trace among them of the characteristics of the sacred colleges of the Romans, like the Arval Brothers or the Salii, charged with the oversight of definite parts of the public services, for there were no public sacrifices. Nor again are they like the Greek families which had hereditary priesthoods, often recognised by the state as at Eleusis, for these again had definite gods or rites to care for, while the Vedic families in the main dealt with the same kinds of rites, the differences between families in the times of which we know being in detail rather than in general aspect. Doubtless the different families were

originally marked out by much more serious differences in cult than those which we can verify: the whole process of the relation of the Rigveda and of the ritual suggests syncretism on a large basis, but the possibility of the development of the distinct priesthoods of Greece and Rome was in all probability hampered and finally prevented by the lack of the temple, and of the organisation of public worship by the state." (Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda I. pp. 290-91).

Office of Purohita

Whatever handicaps there were to the growth of priestly power by the absence of public worship and of the temple in Rigvedic India, they were more than compensated by the development at an early date of the office of Purohita or domestic priest generally attached to the king and less often to other rich and influential persons—an institution peculiar to India. He looked after the performance of ordinary household ceremonies, and at special sacrificial rites he engaged the services of others. But even on those special occasions he was the general superintendent and acted as the most important of the priests At first when the function of the Hotri priest was the most important one the Purohita would naturally take that office (Rig. I. 1. 1 ; V. 11. 2), but in later times when on account of the

increased complications of the ritual the office of Brahma became more important than that of Hota the Purohita took upon himself the function of Brahma instead of Hota (Rig. II. 24. 9 and X. 141. 3; Ait. Br. VII. 26; Tait. Sam. III. 5. 2. 1). As a rule there was only one Purohita attached to a king, who probably acted for life, though special occasions might arise involving the change of one Purohita for another, as that of Viswamitra for Vasistha (VII. 18 and 33). In the Rigvedic period the office does not seem to have become hereditary, as it was in later times. The Purohita was a very important member of the state because he had to accompany the king to battles to secure his victory by means of his prayers (VII. 18), to perform sacrifices to remove such evils as epidemics and droughts (X. 98), and to help the king out of difficulties (Panch. Br. XV. 3. 7). The exaltation of the office of Purohita could not but accelerate the development of the priestly power in society.

Four stages of life

We know from later literature that a long period of study and apprenticeship was insisted upon for a Brahman boy for the acquisition of knowledge and requisite proficiency in religious learning and practices. The traditional stages of life are Brahmacharya (life of study), Garhastya (life of a householder), Vanaprastha (life of an ascetic

after middle age), Yati (life of a hermit). Such stages of life are to be met with even in the Rigveda, though they were not probably so rigidly enforced as in later times. We learn that even in those early days teachers of hymns taught boys to commit them to memory. "The teacher recited the hymns, and the disciples repeated them after him as frogs croak one after another." (VII. 103. 5). A Brahmachari is called "a member of the god's own body." (X. 109. 5). From its description in the Atharvaveda (XI. 5) the ceremony of Upanayana* or initiation for study must be regarded as a long established custom, which existed no doubt among the Rigvedic people. Munis or Sannyasis are described some as being "wind-clad" or naked, and some wearing "soiled garments of brown colour," and "one long-haired Muni, clad in dirty garments," is mentioned as flying through the air like a semi-divine creature (X. 136).

Pretensions and exclusiveness of Brahman class —Viswamitra and Devapi

Even in early Rigvedic times the Brahmanical profession had begun to set up claims of superiority and sacredness for itself. "To

* In modern times the Upanayana practically means the investment with the sacred thread or Yajnopavita. According to Tilak (Orion, 146) the earliest reference to Yajnopavita is found in the Taittiriya Aranyaka (II. 1), where it is described as consisting of a piece of skin or cloth worn in a certain manner and not a thread twisted in a particular manner as in Manu (II. 44).

him the people with free will pay homage, the king with whom the Brahman hath precedence." (IV. 50. 8). "For whomsoever a Brahman acts, him, o king, we deliver" (X. 97. 22). The Brahmans are the progenitors of the Soma (VI. 75. 10) ; are even invoked for protection, perhaps because of their influence with the gods. Hymns like VII. 83. 4 ascribe the highest efficacy to the intercession of the priestly families. The Vedic king is not the high priest as in Egypt and Babylon in as much as there is an acknowledged distinction between a king and a priest. There are few instances which can be cited of a person other than a Brahman exercising priestly functions. The cases of Viswamitra, who was a rajanya of the Bharata and Kusika families (Rig. III. 53. 9-12; Ait. Br. VII. 17. 18), and also the author of numerous Vedic hymns, including the holiest hymn Gayatri, the priest of Sudas (III. 53) and hotri-priest at a sacrifice of king Harishchandra (Ait. Br. VII. 16); and of Devapi, the priest of king Santanu, and the author of hymn X. 98,* who is rightly or

* The Mahabharata (Anushasana, 4) and several Puranas repeat an amusing story to account for Viswamitra's rising to Brahmanhood from the Kshatriya rank. Satyavati, a daughter of Kshatriya parents, had been married to a Brahman sage, Richika. Both she and her mother desired to bear male children of good merits and requested Richika to exercise his supernatural powers for that purpose. He prepared two dishes with magical powers, one for his wife which would make her give birth to a son with the highest qualities of a Brahman and another for his mother-in-law to obtain a son with high

wrongly represented by Yaska and later Pauranic tradition as the elder brother of Santanu, are exceptions, which only prove that the Brahman caste in the Rigvedic period had not yet become separated from all others by insurmountable barriers, and that persons of exceptional abilities might still be admitted to the priestly class from other classes, especially the Kshatriya class.

Other cases of promotion from Kshatriya rank

According to Pauranic tradition the Kanvas were the descendants of Ajamidha,

Kshatriya qualities. The dishes, however, were through *some misapprehension exchanged, and the result was that* the wife of the Brahman sage gave birth to a son with Kshatriya qualities, the renowned Parasurama, while the Kshatriya lady had a son with Brahman qualities, Viswamitra. Such were the childish stories which later writers obsessed with caste prejudices had to invent in order to explain away the inconvenient fact of a Kshatriya becoming a Brahman as if the rigidity of the caste system with its insuperable barriers had been in existence since the earliest age of human history. It may be noted here that Parasurama is not for once mentioned in the whole Vedic literature.

Yaska in the Nirukta II. 10 states, "Here they relate a story. Devapi, son of Ristisena, and Santanu belonged to the family of Kuru and were brothers. Santanu, the younger brother, caused himself to be installed as king, and Devapi began to practise austerities. Then the god did not rain for twelve years in the kingdom of Santanu. At this the Brahmans said to him, 'you have committed sin as you have caused yourself to be installed as king passing by your brother. It is for this reason that the god does not rain.' Santanu then sought to give the crown to Devapi. But the latter said to him, 'Let me be your priest and perform a sacrifice for you.' This hymn, X. 98, expressing a prayer for rain, is his." This story is repeated in some of the Puranas and the Mahabharata.

who was a king of the Puru line (Vishnu Purana IV. 19). They became Brahmans and from them were descended the Kanvayana Brahmans. Among others promoted to Brahmanhood from the Kshatriya rank according to the Puranas may be mentioned the names of Garga, who was born in the line of Bharata (Vishnu Pur. IV. 19); of Mudgala, who was a son of Bharmyasva of the Lunar dynasty (Bhag. Pur. IX. 21); and of Harita, son of Yuvanasva of the Solar dynasty (Vayu, 88; Vishnu, IV. 3). Gritsamada, the author of many hymns in the Rigveda, and the founder of a family of famous Brahman sages, is described in the Mahabharata (Anushasana, ch. 30) as the son of king Vitahavya, who had become a Brahman by the declaration of the sage Bhrigu in order to save his life from the pursuing enemy. Many of these were regarded as Pravara Rishis and many Brahmans to-day suppose themselves to be descended from them. Though no confirmation is obtained about these cases from the Vedic literature, the fact that they were recognised by the later-day Brahman writers, inspite of their strong hierarchical bias and with all their efforts to explain away by the introduction of miraculous elements, proves that such cases were not unknown in the Vedic society. Later tradition in the Vedic literature ascribes the authorship of many hymns to kings like Ambarisha, Rijrasva,

Trasadasyu, Tryaruna, Ajamidha, Sudas, Mandhatri, Prithi Vainya, Sibi, Pratardana, etc In some of these cases the kings mentioned were probably not authors themselves, but patrons of the actual authors. But in some others the authorship seems to be well-established by the tenor of the hymns themselves, as those of the Varshagiras (I. 100), or of Prithi (X. 148). Of the two functions of a Vedic rishi or sage, the composing of hymns and the acting at sacrifices as a priest, the former could not easily become the exclusive monopoly of the Brahman caste as poetical genius could not be shut out of other ranks in society. So long as the period of hymn-making lasted there could not be rigid exclusion, though, as the Brahmans, with the exception of the kingly families, were the only educated class in society, the bulk of the hymns were composed by them. But greater exclusion was exercised with regard to the function of a priest in which birth, and not genius, came to be the determining factor. So while it is a more common occurrence for a king to compose hymns which found their way into Brahmanical liturgies, it is very rare to find a king acting as a priest at a sacrifice either for himself or for others. At least this is certain that a member of the kingly class had to give up his Kshatriya life and be raised into the Brahman caste before he was allowed to act as a priest.

Struggle between Brahmans and Kshatriyas

It is interesting to speculate as to what would have happened in mediaeval Europe if there had been no rule of celibacy for the priests and monks preventing the transmission of acquired power and position from father to son, and if the Church had not been feudalised with the result that the bishops in their feudal capacity had to belong to the community of ordinary barons. The Brahmans in ancient India were shrewd enough to keep themselves aloof from the Kshatriya interests, i.e., the work of governing, and thus could build up their spiritual domination unhampered by the necessity of mixing and jostling with the ruling class for everyday existence. The European Kshatriyas could not remain indifferent to the growth of ecclesiastical power which meant to them the acquisition by the Church of more fiefs, of more exemptions from public duty, and of more power over the state administration. Hence while there were widespread conflicts in Europe between the lay nobles and the spiritual lords, between the State and the Church, between national spirit and papal domination, which eventually led to the defeat of the Church, in India the struggle never assumed the shape of a class warfare, but was confined to individual efforts to assert the power of the king over the priest, each defeat, though personal, only serving to ensure

greater pretensions and prerogatives for the community of the victor Brahman.

It must be admitted that the temporal rulers in ancient India did not differ much in their pride and ambition from their brethren in other parts of the world, and that they did not tamely submit with a reverent spirit to the growing power and pretensions of the priesthood. Unfortunately the stories of such struggles are almost entirely lost, or are embellished with such elements of fancy and miracle to show off the might of spiritual weapons like curses and anathemas that it is hopeless to get at the kernel of truth. In the Rigvedic hymns no such story is recorded, if we except the struggle between Vasistha and Viswamitra, which, too, is represented as a quarrel between two rival priestly families rather than one between Brahmans and Kshatriyas. The echoes, however, of such struggles happening in Vedic times are found in the Pauranic literature, which in its earlier form represented the history of kings and kingdoms as distinguished from the history of sacrifices in the Vedic literature. But such handlings have the Pauranic texts received from time to time from interested parties, and particularly in the post-Buddhist period from Brahman writers with their sacerdotal motives, that no reliable or even consistent description can be gleaned about the parties concerned in the struggles, or the points at

issue between them, or the nature of the contests

The story of Vasistha and Viswamitra, as given in different Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, shows how Viswamitra, the king, was vanquished by the Brahman Vasistha with the aid of several barbarian tribes, and how it was only when Viswamitra relinquished his crown and Kshatriya power and attained to the position of a Brahman that he could contend more successfully with his rival with the latter's weapons. A different picture is given in the story of Parasurama who, though born a Brahman, adopted the Kshatriya profession in order to avenge himself on the persecuting Kshatriya princes, but, though successful for a time, was in the end convinced of his mistaken policy, gave up temporal lordship and betook himself to penances and austerities. It was better for the Brahmanical cause that Parasurama gave up his military life or that many Parasuramas did not arise in the rank of the Brahmans, as otherwise the Brahmans would have courted and received more defeats like that sustained by Parasurama at the hands of the Kshatriya Rama, which would have reacted disastrously upon the relationship between the two orders. A Brahman king or a Brahman general like Dronacharya cannot take shelter under the armour of inviolability and spiritual

superiority, and cannot exploit the superstitious feelings of the ignorant masses by posing as an oppressed saint under the uplifted arms of worldly pride and sacrilegious lust. Besides, for an occupational caste that the Brahmans had been in their origin, any straying out of their sphere of action and encroachment upon other peoples' fields was sure to invite reciprocity of treatment and weaken the barrier which was sought to be made insurmountable between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans.

Among less known stories are those of Vena, Nahusha and Nimi, who, as Manu says in VII. 41, came to their destruction on account of their haughtiness and irreverence to Brahmans. Vena was a heretic who wanted to upset the Brahmanical rule of life and who claimed to be superior even to the Brahman priests, for which he was dethroned, if not killed, in favour of his son Prithu who declared, "The great Brahmans, the chief of men, shall be reverenced by me." (Mhb. Santi, 59). Nahusha was guilty of insulting Brahmans by making them draw his car and even violating the sacredness of a Brahman's body by kicking the sage Agastya for which he was cursed to become a serpent. It is admitted that he was so established in power that most of the Brahmans and their champion gods had failed to do anything and tamely submitted to his will for a long time (Mhb. Udyoga,

10-16). Nimi did not challenge the superiority of the Brahman caste, but had the presumption to assume the master's right of employing and dismissing his priest according to his own convenience. In this case the king and his priest Vasistha cursed each other to destruction, and as Nimi was supported by his newly-appointed priest the question of right was not definitely decided. (Bhag. Pur. IX. 13).

It would be risky to build up any history on the materials of these stories In fact, some of the names are very confusing. Vena, for instance, unless we suppose a different person to be meant there, is celebrated in Rig. X. 93. 14 as a liberal patron of the Brahman author. Allowing for all confusion of names, misrepresentation of facts, and introduction of miraculous elements, we must admit that these stories represent a distant echo of the bitter, and often tragic, contests which marked the early history of the Vedic society when the priestly caste was being formed and establishing superiority at the expense of other classes. Many of the causes which led to the exaltation of the Church and the Pope in Europe during the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. must have operated also in India, and the fate of Vena and Nahusha may be compared to that of the Hohenstaufen Emperors in their honest and strenuous, though fruitless, efforts to keep down the priestly hierarchy under the control of the crown. But while in Europe the

Church after overcoming emperors and kings received its death-blow from the growth of national spirit and the spread of Renaissance ideas, the priestly class in India obtained a permanent lease of their prerogatives and pretensions on account of the causes noticed above in Chapter I.

Kshatriya and Vaisya

While the distinction between the priests and other classes was more or less clearly defined, there must be very few references in a book like the Rigveda about the distinctions between *the other classes in society*. The word Rajanya, which is a synonym of the word Kshatriya in the Sanskrit literature, is found only in the Purusha Sukta, and Kshatriya or Kshatra in the sense of a ruler or a person belonging to the ruling class, is found in a few places, as in IV. 42. 1, VIII. 104. 13, X. 109. 3. The term Vaisya occurs only in the Purusha Sukta, although the word Vis, meaning common people, is of frequent occurrence. There is nothing to indicate that a separate warrior caste (later-day Kshatriya) had been formed with distinctions between military and non-military. It was still the custom for all freemen to bear arms for the state in times of necessity, and the later rule that none lower than the rank of Kshatriya should bear arms for fighting had not come into force. There are passages in the Rigveda (I. 69. 3; IV. 24. 4;

VI. 26. 1; VII. 79. 2) in which the common people, Vis, also are said to fight. But a sharp line of distinction had arisen between the members of the ruling families and the ordinary people. We need not be surprised at this if we consider the sacredness and reverence with which the ruling families, say, of Amal, Balting and Merowing, were regarded among the early Ostrogoths, Visigoths and Franks respectively, in fact, among the whole Teutonic race. The Vedic kingship was normally hereditary, and so we may believe that the Rajanyas, or the men of kingly families, formed a practically hereditary ruling class. Even if there were any election it was confined to a few ruling families in the tribe or state, and never open to the whole community at large. In a monarchical state, therefore, there was separation between those who had royal blood in their veins and those who had not. In a republican state the oligarchical principle prevailed and the right of governing belonged to a number of ruling families. If we add to it the institution of an order, like the thegnhood of the Anglo-Saxons, which living more or less upon the support and bounties of the king formed an efficient nucleus of the fighting force and which in case of a general levy furnished the experts and leaders of the horde, the separation between the Rajanyas and the Vaisyas becomes complete. The beginnings of the process, whatever might be their nature,

are lost to our view, as when the curtain of darkness is for the first time lifted with the advent of the Rigvedic bards, the ruling class is sharply distinguished from the commonalty. The Brahman hymn-makers and priests no doubt claimed pre-eminence, but the power and wealth of the ruling families, together with their culture, were things not to be ignored, and the latter could not be relegated to a decidedly inferior position. Some sort of give and take must be made between the possessors of spiritual power and those of temporal power so that the two combined might lord it over the people at large. Thus Rishi Kutsa declares in Rig. I. 108. 7 that the gods Indra and Agni delight to live in his own house or in that of a Brahman or a Rajan (but not in those of other classes). Rig. V. 54. 7 states, "That man, whether a rishi or a prince, whom ye, O Maruts, support, is neither conquered nor killed, he neither decays nor is distressed, nor is injured; his riches do not decline, nor his supports." The constant association of the names of priests and kings in the hymns bespeaks a somewhat closer relation between the two higher classes, while a much wider gulf divides the Brahmans from the commoners, the Vaisyas. There is no instance recorded in the Vedic literature of a Vaisya rising to the Brahman rank, except perhaps Vatsapri, son of Bhalandana. The Matsya Purana mentions two other Vaisya

names, Vasasva and Sankila, as hymn-makers (145. 116), with what authority it is not known, but distinctly calls them Vaisyas and not Brahmans. The Harivamsa XI relates that two sons of Nabhagarista, who was a Vaisya, became Brahmans.

Professional classes

One cause of the gradual lowering of the status of the Vaisyas was that while the Brahman and Kshatriya classes were somewhat homogeneous units with more or less defined functions the Vaisyas were a unit only in name, being formed of a conglomeration of diverse classes with diverse functions and with different rules and regulations guiding them in their respective guilds and corporations. The Rigvedic society had far advanced from the primitive stage when one man could till his land, weave his cloth, make his own earthen pots and crude weapons, and keep his flock. Division of labour had become a necessity, and various professional classes had arisen in society. Among the various classes mentioned in the Rigveda are Rathakara (chariot-maker), Taksan (carpenter), Kulala (potter), Karmara (blacksmith), Vapta (barber), Suravata (vintner), Charmamna (leather-dresser), etc. The artisan classes, who were regarded in later times as Sudras and more frequently as worse than Sudras, being mixed castes, were respectable citizens

of the state in the Rigvedic society, and evidently belonged to the community of Vis. In fact, no occupation was regarded as degrading for an Aryan freeman, though the positions of a priest and a ruler conferred upon their holders the highest status in society. The physicians, for instance, in later times formed a caste of their own, and a Brahman professing the function of a physician would be degraded. But in Rig. X. 97. 22 we find Brahmans exercising the functions of a physician without dishonour. "With Soma as their sovereign lord the Plants hold colloquy and say · O king, we save from death the man whose cure a Brahman undertakes." Diseases were believed to be caused by the displeasure of gods or possession by demons; hence a physician had to be well-versed in mantras for propitiating gods and driving away demons as well as in the science of medicine. The physicians were generally Brahmans, and, like the witch-doctors in primitive societies, were held in high respect, so much so that many gods, such as Asvins (I. 116. 16), Varuna (I. 24. 9), Rudra (II. 33. 4-7), are frequently called physicians. That different occupations did not impart any blemish even to Brahman families is indicated in IX. 112 3, where the rishi sings, "I am a poet, my father is a physician, my mother a grinder of corn. With our different views, seeking after gain, we run as

after cattle."* The Ribhus were supposed to have been skilful artisans who were exalted to divine honours (I. 161. 1-5). Some of the descendants of the great sage Bhrigu were expert chariot-makers (X. 39. 14).

Dasa—Sudra

Whatever differences there were between the three classes, Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya in the Rigvedic society, they were nothing compared with those which distinguished ethnically and culturally the Aryans, white-skinned, good-featured, making sacrifices and worshipping gods like Agni, Indra, Varuna, etc., from the Dasas or Dasyus, who were black-skinned (krishnatvach), noseless or flat-nosed (anas), of unintelligible speech (mridhravach), not sacrificing (ayajnan), worshipping no god (adevayu), and following strange customs (anyavrata). At first little quarter was given to the resisting natives of the soil. But gradually a milder policy was adopted, and large numbers of the Dasas were taken as slaves instead of being massacred. In the Rigveda we often find mention of slaves, sometimes in large numbers, and wealth was already to some extent made up of ownership of slaves. As the word Dasa became in the later literature synonymous with slave, we may suppose that the slaves were taken almost entirely from

* कारुरहं ततो भिषगुपलप्रक्षिणी नना ।
नानाधियो वसूयवोऽनु गा इव तस्थिमेन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव ॥

among the conquered non-Aryans In the Vedic hymn-literature Dasa originally denoted an enemy and secondarily a slave, but Dasi or female Dasa from the beginning of its use bore the meaning of slave-girl and not the wife of an enemy. This shows that at first captives were taken of women only, the males not being spared, and that at a later stage male Dasas were also acquired as slaves. The Purusha Sukta, which describes practically the creation of the universe and its inhabitants, does not mention the Dasa but gives the name of Sudra instead. The word Sudra does not occur anywhere else in the Rigveda In the later period Sudra denoted a slave. Thus the Aitareya Brahmana (VII. 29) says, "One like a Sudra shall be born in thy line, the slave of another, who may be driven away or slain at will." The term Sudra has no obvious explanation, and a fantastic derivative meaning is given in later literature from the roots *such*, to grieve, and *dru*, to run (Vayu Pur. VIII. 165). Probably it was originally the name of some prominent Dasa tribe conquered and reduced to slavery by the Aryans, as Karian became synonymous with slave at Athens. By the time the Purusha Sukta was composed the Dasa slaves of the Aryan conquerors had begun to be called Sudras, and hence the occurrence of the word therein instead of Dasa. The Aryan community was complete with the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

Vaisyas, and no particular work was assigned to the Sudras except to serve their masters as slaves. The rights and obligations of their masters did not attach to them, and they were certainly not admitted into the rites and ceremonies of the Aryan folk. On the other hand, though they were treated with contempt because of their colour, creed and enslavement, there is no indication that they were regarded as "unclean" or "impure", and were prevented from having association with their masters in the course of daily work. The Dasas, as painted in the Rigveda in the darkest colour by their conquering enemies, cannot be shown to have a low state of culture or a low standard of living which might cause a feeling of abhorrence in the minds of the Aryans.* Indeed, a Brahman rishi is found to associate himself with a Dasa king, Balbutha, and celebrate his generosity in VIII. 46. 32. So though there were hatred and contempt, there was no touch-me-notism in the relation between the Aryan masters and the Dasa or Sudra slaves. Apparently there were no Dasa or Sudra freemen in the country conquered by the Aryans, and so no code of laws, like that of Theodoric the Ostrogoth in Italy, was necessary to guide the relations between the two races of men. The lot of the Sudras was not worse than that of the helots in ancient Greece or of the Negroes

* Vide the author's "Aryanisation of India," Ch. V.

in America before their emancipation. The Aryans of the Rigvedic age resembled, however, the people of the Northern States of America rather than of the Southern, generally doing their own work of husbandry and industrial art themselves, and depending on slave labour occasionally for assistance in menial capacities. There might have been even Aryan slaves who were either taken captive in war, or who had lost their liberty by failing to repay debts or pledging their services to avoid starvation. But all these remained slaves for a limited period, and, at all events, the lawful son of such an acquired slave became a freeman. Such must have been the traditional custom of the Aryans, and so no instance is recorded of a Brahman, Kshatriya or Vaisya slave being engaged in menial work, or of such a person becoming a Sudra because of his slavery. Kautilya lays down the rule clearly when he states, "It is no crime for Mlechchhas to sell or mortgage the life of their own offspring. But never shall an Arya be subjected to slavery. The offspring of a man who has sold himself to slavery shall be an Arya." (Arthasastra III. 13). Similar is the dictum of Manu (VIII. 412): "A Brahman who, because he is powerful, out of greed makes initiated men of the twice-born castes against their will do the work of slaves, shall be fined by the king six hundred panas."

Food and Drink regulations

In chapter I it has been noticed that the restrictions of food and drink and the rigidity of marriage rules are not to a small extent responsible for widening the gulf between the higher and the lower castes, and also creating new subcastes among one group of men. Thus the Brahmans as a rule are expected not to eat fish and flesh, not to speak of beef, and to drink wine, while the greater is the indulgence of any caste in these things the lesser is the rank assigned to it in society by the Brahmans. Similarly, the Brahmans must not think of the remarriage of their widows, and ought to give their daughters in marriage as early as possible, certainly before they attain puberty. But greater freedom is in an increasing degree allowed to the lower castes, the understanding being that the discarding of the undesirable practices by the members of any caste or a section of a caste would lead to their being regarded as purer and therefore higher in rank than their fellows. This factor was absent in the Rigvedic society, and the question of purity and impurity as regards these practices had not yet arisen.

The Rigvedic people, including the Brahmans, were fond of meat-eating, and practically all the important ceremonies and sacrifices were attended with slaughter of animals. The principle of Ahimsa or non-injury to animals was then unknown to the

rishis. Offerings of flesh were frequently made to the gods, and the worshippers, including the priests, ate the offerings. Thus Agni is described as "fed on ox and cow" (VIII. 43. 11). "Indra will eat thy bulls... Fifteen sacrificers then prepare a score of bullocks for me, and I devour the fat thereof; they fill my belly full with food." (X. 86. 13-14). "When thou hadst eaten three hundred buffaloes' flesh and drunk as Maghavan three lakes of Soma, all the gods raised as it were a shout of triumph to Indra because he slew the Dragon." (V. 29. 8). Horse-sacrifice is described in I. 162, where the immolators are asked to "dress the sacrifice with perfect cooking." The custom of entertaining a distinguished guest with the meat of a bull or a barren cow, as we find in the time of the Brahmanas (S. P. Br. III. 4. 1. 2; Ait. Br. I. 3. 4), must have been in existence in the time of the Rigveda. Then at wedding ceremonies "oxen were slain," evidently for the feeding of the invited guests (X. 85. 13). From the Brahmanas we learn that the sage Agastya slaughtered one hundred bulls at a sacrifice (Tait. Br. II. 7. 11. 1; Panch. Br. XXI. 14. 5). Yajnavalkya, the greatest sage and philosopher of his time, was fond of eating the flesh of milch-cows and bullocks if it was tender (S. P. Br. III. 1. 2. 21). The Rigvedic Indians, however, were conscious of the great usefulness of the cow as a giver of milk and as a medium of exchange, and so were loathe to make indis-

criminate destruction of this useful animal. Hence the name *aghnya*, not to be slain, was sometimes given to the cow in the Rigveda and some sanctity was attached to her, as in VIII. 90. 15: "The Mother of the Rudras, Daughter of the Vasus, Centre of Nectar, Sister of the Adityas, to folk who understand I will proclaim it—injure not Aditi, the Cow, the sinless." In some passages there is mention of the Cosmic Cow, as "in the Cow's home was born the Great Eternal" (III. 55. 1), of cows as Heaven and Earth (I. 146. 3, IX. 70. 6), of cows as rain-clouds (III. 1. 7, 55. 16), of cows as rays of light (V. 45), etc., etc. In fact, the beginnings of such tender feeling for the cow can be traced to Indo-Iranian times (Macdonell, Hist. of Sanskrit Literature, p. 68).

As regards drink, the Rigvedic sages had a great fondness for the fermented juice of Soma plant, which was a highly favourite drink both of gods and men. The whole of the ninth book of the Rigveda is devoted to the praise of Soma. A rishi thus sings of Soma: "These glorious drops that give me freedom have I drunk. Closely they knit my joints as straps secure a car. Let them protect my foot from slipping on the way: yea, let the drops I drink preserve me from disease." (VIII. 48. 5). The rishis had also little aversion to the drinking of Sura, a kind of spirituous liquor made by vintners probably from barley or rice and kept stored in jars and skin vessels (I. 116.

7; 191. 10). "First have the liberal gained a fragrant dwelling, and got themselves a bride in fair apparel. The liberal have obtained their draught of Sura wine and conquered those who, unprovoked, assailed them." (X. 107. 9). At the same time they were alive to the evil effects of drunkenness and so classed wine with dice as an evil temptation (VII. 86. 6). While Soma was associated with religious ceremonies, Sura was essentially a drink of ordinary life (Tait. Br. I. 3. 3. 2).

Rules of Marriage

In the Rigveda restrictions on marriage seem to have been of the simplest kind. The rules of exogamy in respect of Gotra, etc., which were rigidly laid down in the Grihya and Dharma Sutras, were not evidently in existence in the Rigvedic age. The word Gotra occurs several times in the Rigveda in the sense of a cowstall or herd, but never to denote a clan or gens as in the later literature. Only two kinds of marriage were directly forbidden, of brothers and sisters, and of parents and children. Thus the wooing of Yama by his sister Yami (X. 10), the wedding of Prajapati and his daughter (X. 61), the sexual connections between Pushan and his mother (VI. 55) are noticed with disapproval. Such incestuous connections are explained mythologically or allegorically in the Brahmanas (e. g. S. P. Br. I. 7. 4. 1; Panch. Br. VIII. 2. 10),

which is probably true. At the most, it may be conceded that these legends are reminiscences of a long past primitive age, but they certainly do not refer to practices current in the time of the Rigveda. Yama's refusal is emphatic because "they call it sin when one does approach his sister for intercourse" (X. 10. 12).

There were no definite restrictions on intermarriage between the different classes of the Aryan race; in fact there was no necessity, as the different groups in society, whatever might be their occupations, were by complexion, features, language and creed practically homogeneous. Nowhere in the Rigveda is any mention of a Vaisya being regarded as less pure than a Brahman, and of social intercourse between the two as degrading to the latter. Actual examples of mixed marriage are not found in the body of the Rigveda because caste in its present sense did not exist at the time. But from the later traditions about many of the Rigvedic persons making such marriages, as we learn from the Brahmanas and the Epics, it is inferred that such marriages, especially between Brahman and Kshatriya, were very common in Rigvedic times. Some of the names like Yayati and Devayani, Dushyanta and Sakuntala, might or might not be historical, but the currency of their stories indicates the prevalence of the custom alluded to therein. Other cases like

Rishi Syavasva marrying the daughter of king Rathaviti, as told by the commentator on Rig. V. 61; king Asanga having as wife a lady of the Angirasa family (VIII. 1. 34); and the sage Kakshivan marrying the daughters of king Svanaya and celebrating the liberality of his father-in-law (I. 126), appear to be historical. As the non-Aryans, Dasas or Sudras, came into contact with the Aryan people in general either as hated enemies or despised slaves and not as friends or fellow-citizens, and as the number of slaves captured and retained for service was yet small, the colour question, the fear of the whites being tainted and swamped by the blacks, did not become acute. Hence there was no necessity for stringent regulations in this period, unlike in the following, to prevent intermixture between the Aryans and the Dasas or Sudras. It must be imagined that the colour and culture differences existing between the two races were a sufficient barrier against regular unions between the two, though not against irregular connections between the white masters and the black female slaves producing cross-breeds, who remained unrecognised among their mothers' people. That even priests, not to speak of kings and nobles, kept numbers of slave girls as concubines in the Rigvedic age is clearly indicated by passages like VIII. 19. 36, which states that king Trasadasyu gave fifty slave girls as *badhus* to the sage Sobhari-Kanva. This

probably accounts for the fact that even the lowest classes in the Punjab have finer noses than those of some of the highest castes in other provinces. Mixed castes produced by the unions of persons belonging to different castes are not to be met with in the Rigveda, because such marriages, particularly among the three higher castes, were freely allowed, and the children invariably took the ranks of their fathers. There is no mention of a fifth caste or untouchable caste like the Nishadas, Chandalas, etc.*

Child marriage not the practice

Child marriage or the compulsory marriage of a girl before the age of puberty seems to be unknown to the Rigvedic people. There is no text in the Rigveda speaking approvingly of such a custom. On the contrary, the profuse allusions to amours between young men and maidens (kanyas), to the right of selection of a husband which was sometimes allowed to a maiden, to unmarried girls who grew old in the house of their parents, indicate that marriage normally took place between grown-up young men and women. Elopement with a lover and subsequent marriage with him, sometimes even against the wishes of her

* This state of things is remembered in the Mahabharata (Anushasana, 44) which declares—

"त्रिषु वर्णेषु जातो हि ब्राह्मणाद्ब्राह्मणो भवेत्
स्मृताश्च वर्णाश्चत्वारः पञ्चमो नाधिगम्यते ॥"

parents, as in the case of Purumitra's daughter Kamadyu with Vimada, was not a rare occurrence, and is not disapprovingly spoken of in the hymns (I. 117. 20; X. 39. 7). The wedding hymns (X. 85.) and the ritual described therein clearly presume a real marriage, and not a nominal one, in which the brides have their desires fully awakened, and join their husbands as willing partners for shouldering the responsibilities of life and for bearing children. An essential feature of the wedding was the going of the bride with the bridegroom and her taking over the responsibilities of her husband's household on the second day, the consummation usually taking place on the third day after marriage. The bride was asked to "go to the house to be the household's mistress and speak as lady to the gathered people...and closely unite thy body with this man, thy lord." "O Pushan, send her on as most auspicious, her who shall be the sharer of my pleasures; her who shall twine her loving arms about me and welcome all my love and my embraces." (X. 85. 26, 37).

The following verses are to be recited by the bridegroom in the course of the wedding ceremony: "First, Soma had thee for his bride; the Gandharva obtained thee next; Agni was thy third husband; thy fourth husband am I, a son of man. Soma gave thee to the Gandharva; the Gandharva gave thee to Agni, and Agni has given thee

to me, for wealth and sons." (Rig. X. 85. 40-41). Sayana's commentary on these verses runs as follows: "Soma possesses a girl so long as the desire for sexual intercourse has not arisen in her, when it has begun the Gandharva takes her and then transfers her to Agni from whom man obtains possession of her for producing wealth and sons." The explanation is more clear in the Atrisamhita: "When hair has appeared Soma (i.e. the Lord of the Vegetable world) enjoys a maiden; the Gandharva (i.e. the Spirit of Graces) enjoys her when the breasts are developed; and Agni (i.e. Fructifier) enjoys her when she has had the menstrual discharge." The verses would lose all their meaning in case of marriage before puberty.

Remarriage of woman

No aversion is expressed anywhere in the Rigveda to the remarriage of widowed women. Probably the custom of a widow marrying the brother of her deceased husband was general, and hence the word Devara, literally meaning second husband, according to Yaska's Nirukta, coming to denote a woman's brother-in-law. When the dead body was going to be burnt or buried, the dead man's brother seized the widow with the following verse: "Arise, woman, thou art lying by one whose life is gone; come to the world of the living away from thy husband, and become

the wife of him who grasps thy hand and woos thee as a lover." (X. 18. 8).* This custom is again referred to in X. 40. 2, where a widow is said "to draw her husband's brother in bed." Some scholars seek to find from certain passages in the Rigveda, especially X. 85. 37-38, where husbands in the plural number are mentioned in connection with a single wife, the sanction of polyandry at that time, but specific instances are not mentioned. The case of Rodasi (Lightning) being the common wife of the Maruts (I. 167) is probably an allegory. The Epic literature, however, supplies us with several instances, which indicates that probably at some time or other some form of polyandry had been in existence among the Indo-Aryans. Besides the later case of the five Pandavas marrying one wife, the Mahabharata records the stories of a Brahman lady, Jatila Gautami, marrying seven rishis; of Marisa becoming the common wife of the ten Prachetas (I. 197); and of

* See Sayana's commentary on this verse in the Taittiriya Samhita VII. 1 4.

Rig. X. 40.2: कुहस्विद्दोषा कुहवस्तोरश्विना कुहाभिपित्वं करत कुहोषतुः । को वां शयुत्रा विधवेव देवरं मर्यं न योषा कृणुते सधस्था ॥

Sayana's commentary on the second part of the verse —"शयुत्रा" शयने "विधवाइव" यथा मृतभर्तृकानारी "देवरं" भर्तृभ्रातरं अभिमुखी करोति। "मर्यंन" यथा च सर्व्वं मनुष्यं "योषा" सर्व्वा नारी सम्भोगकाले अभिमुखी करोति तद्वत् इत्यर्थः।

Yaska here explains Devara (husband's brother) as द्वितीयो वरः or second husband.

Madhavi of the family of Yayati being married by four different kings, Haryasva, Divodasa, Usinara and Viswamitra (V. 119). Brahman husbands did not think that their wives became impure and unacceptable in case of their abduction by others of any caste. In fact, they piteously clamoured for the restoration of their abducted wives, whoever might be the outragers and whatever the period of detention (Rig. X. 109). Children born of illicit unions were not outcasted. One such child left by his mother, an "unwedded damsel," in an ant-hill was saved by Indra and became a rishi of fame (IV. 19. 9; 30. 16).

Position of woman in the Rigveda

One of the causes of the caste system becoming so rigid and assuming so much of its dark complexion in later times was the want of respect for the feelings and rights of the female sex. If women had been allowed to enjoy more liberty in the matter of the choice of their husbands, the formation of water-tight compartments of caste would have been prevented, a Brahman husband treating his Sudra wife as "a corpse" and her fellows as unclean would have been impossible, a decrepit Kulin Brahman of Bengal marrying one hundred wives would have been unimaginable. The beginnings of this mental attitude, the arrogance of the male sex, however, like those of many

other factors associated with the growth of caste, can be traced back to the Rigveda The Rigvedic society is essentially patriarchal. Among scores of deities the only important female was Ushas. The whole Vedic literature emphasises the necessity for women to give birth to male children in preference to female, as a son was "the cancellor of his father's debt to his forbears." (Rig. VI. 61. 1). Indra is besought to give ten sons to the newly-wedded bride (X. 85 45) 'Sonlessness' was regarded as equivalent to want of property, and prayers were made to gods "not to give us up to poverty, want of brave sons, and lack of cattle, but to help us to strength, wealth in progeny, abundance in sacrifice." (III. 16. 5-6). This was because sons served not only to defend the interests of the family against enemies and to keep up the continuity of the lines but to prevent the dead ancestors from starving in the next world, as sons alone could offer oblations to the manes. A woman is supposed to be never able to take care of herself so that after her father's death she had to live under the guardianship of her brother till her marriage, as otherwise she would go astray (I. 124. 7).

While polyandry was going out of fashion, polygamy was very common. Thus the rishi Chyavana married a number of maidens in old age (I. 116. 10). There is mention of rival wives in ordinary families in many passages

(I. 105. 8; I. 62. 11; X. 101. 11). The result was sometimes very bitter for the husband (I. 105. 8), and charms were often used by women "wherewith one quells the rival wife and gains the husband for oneself.... Blow thou the rival wife away and make my husband only mine... And she who is my rival wife is lower than the lowest dames. Her very name I utter not." (X. 145. 1-4). A wife was regarded as property over whose person the husband (called Pati or lord) had complete control, and possession of whom could be obtained by others in war (V. 31. 2; VIII. 46. 33) and gambling (X. 34). The cruelty, neglect and desertion by husbands was sometimes requited by wives proving faithless to their 'lords' and entertaining secret lovers (IV. 5. 5). The mentality of the Brahman hymn-makers towards their womenfolk can be judged from remarks like the following: "With women there can be no lasting friendship; hearts of women are like those of hyenas." (X. 95. 15). "Indra himself hath said, The mind of woman brooks not discipline, her intellect hath little weight." (VIII. 33. 17). Such remarks, however, which only reflect the eternal sex antagonism throughout the world and which could meet with fitting retorts had the pen been in the hands of the other sex, do not imply any ritual contempt or ceremonial impurity for woman. On the other hand, the encomiums bestowed on women in the Rigveda are very

liberal, and more frequent than flippant remarks. The fact that "a wife is home and dwelling...Thy joy is in thy home, thy gracious consort" (III. 53) was well understood by the husband of the time, to whom his wife was ever dear (I. 73. 3).

As compared with that in later times, the position of woman in the Rigvedic period was not degraded. Side by side with instances of polygamy and moral laxness, monogamy is help up as an ideal (I. 124. 7; IV. 3. 2; X. 71. 4), and a large part of the wedding hymns treats of the marriage-tie with great reverence, and lays down the rule of conjugal fidelity on both the husband and the wife. After marriage the wife went "to the husband's house to be the mistress of his household...to bear full sway over the husband's father, the husband's mother, and rule supreme over his sister and over his brothers." (X. 85. 26, 46). The wife could take part in religious ceremonies as an equal partner (Patni) of her husband, and offer joint libations to the gods. "Praiseworthy blessing hast thou laid upon the pair who with uplifted ladle serve thee, man and wife." (I. 83. 3). "Couples desirous of thy aid are storming thee, pouring their presents forth to win a stall of kine, pouring gifts, Indra, seeking thee." (I. 131. 3). "O gods, with constant draught of milk, husband and wife with one accord press out and wash the Soma juice." (VIII. 31. 5). Agni, in whose worship

the wife of the sacrificer bore an important part, is called "the lord of matrons." (I. 66. 4). From Rig. V. 28 we learn that ladies, like Visvavara, could not only compose verses but even perform the function of a priest at a sacrifice. Ghosha (X. 39), Lopamudra (I. 179) and Apala (VIII. 80) composed hymns and rose to the rank of rishis. The last-named lady also offered the Soma libation to Indra and was cured of her skin disease for which she had been abandoned by her husband. Women also took active part as companions to their husbands in fighting. Thus Mudgalani, wife of the sage Mudgala, drove the car of her husband, and fought successfully with arms against robbers (X. 102). Vispala, a queen, lost her leg in a battle and obtained an iron leg through the grace of the Asvins (I. 116. 15; X. 39. 8). Women were not debarred from attending public assemblies and festivals as "from olden time the matron goes to feast and general sacrifice" (X. 86. 10), and "dames come to an assembly." (X. 168. 2). When out of the house probably they had to cover themselves with some cloak which veiled them from the gaze of strangers (VIII. 33. 19).

While a woman could not share with her brother the paternal inheritance (III. 31. 2), she possessed the right of being maintained in the house of her brother till marriage. After the death of her husband she could either produce children by the system of Niyoga or levirate to

inherit his property or remarry to find a fresh maintenance and shelter. Besides, the practice of adoption of a male child was looked upon with disapproval, as it is declared, "No son is he who springs from others; lengthen not out the pathways of the foolish. Unwelcome for adoption is the stranger, one to be thought of as another's offspring, though grown familiar by continual presence." (VII. 4. 7-8). In case of failure of male heirs of the body daughters' sons were regarded good heirs (III. 31. 1). In these circumstances and in view of the fact that a daughter could live a life of maidenhood in her father's house till death without any reproach, the legal position of a daughter in the family was certainly not unfavourable.

CHAPTER III

Caste during the Brahmana* Period

(c. B.C. 1400–800)

New tendencies at work

With the expansion of the Vedic Aryans from the Punjab to Bengal and from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas and over into the Deccan, their society underwent considerable changes and developments. Firstly, old hymns had become set formulas and new hymns ceased to be composed. So the whole energy of the priestly class was devoted to the varied handlings of the hymns and the elaboration of the rites and ceremonies. Priestly families in exclusive possession of the growing and extensive ritualistic literature could easily shut out aspirants for priestly profession from other classes, a thing which was not so easy during the period of hymn-making when the poetic genius even in the lower ranks of society had to be recognised and given a place of honour. It was to the interest of the Brahmanical order that no new hymns should be accepted and held sacred. Moreover, the more artificial and complicated the rites

* To avoid confusion the word Brahmana is used in this book to denote the literature of that name and Brahman to denote a member of the priestly caste.

grew the less was the chance for any one to act as a priest who had not made a special study of the subject, both theoretical and practical, for years under the guidance of an expert. And when the experts, actuated by guild spirit and class jealousy, would not give lessons to any one except of their own caste, no opening was left to an outsider, endowed with whatsoever intellect and character, to enter into the priestly order. Lest there be any admission by stealth into the sacerdotal order from the lower ranks, something like a census register was devised and maintained by the institution during this period of Gotras and Pravaras, showing that such and such a person was a lineal descendant of such and such a rishi of the Rigvedic age.*

* Gotra is something like a clan the members of which regard themselves as being descended from a common ancestor, mythical, legendary or historical. According to tradition as preserved in the Mahabharata (Santi, 296) the original Gotras were four in number, called after the names of Angiras, Kasyapa, Vasistha and Bhrigu. Later the Angiras Gotra was split up into two, which were known by the names of the two grandsons of Angiras, viz. Bharadvaja and Gautama. Bhrigu's name came to be substituted by that of his descendant Jamadgni. To these afterwards three new Gotras were added—Atri, Viswamitra, Agastya. Thus the number of Gotras rose to eight, as is mentioned by writers like Baudhayana and Manu. But the process of splitting-up and addition continued until the number has swelled to several scores. Thus Dhananjaya in his Dharmapradipa gives a list of 42 Gotras

Pravara is a thing peculiarly Indian, or rather Brahmanical. Pravara rishis are those ancestors in one's family who composed hymns of the Veda in praise of Agni or Fire-god. According to the Srauta Sutras, a sacrificer must recite the names of his Pravara ancestors so as to inform Agni that he is the descendant of those sages who

Secondly, with the extension of Aryan influence and rule over a vast land out of all proportion to their number, the policy of extermination or wholesale slave-making of the native Dasa or Sudra population had to be changed, and a new policy of accepting Sudras as subjects or serfs was adopted. But with the change of policy there appeared the danger of the handful of conquerors being submerged both racially and culturally by the overwhelming black population. The more was the contact established between the white and the black the greater was the necessity of maintaining purity of blood, a question which did not much worry the Aryan conquerors in

offered prayers to him by their hymns. The founder of a Gotra may or may not be a composer of Vedic hymns, and hence while Gotras are innumerable the number of Pravaras is fixed. There is a rule that "one may recite one, two, three, but not four, nor more than five, names of Pravara rishis," though he may boast of more than five Vedic bards in his ancestral line. Thus one cites his Pravara as Angirasa-Barhaspatya-Bharadvaja, while another cites his as Aurva-Chyavana-Bhargava-Jamadagnya-Apnuvana.

The registration of Gotras and Pravaras began at a time when the Brahman caste had become rigidly exclusive, and when the belief had become deep-rooted that all the Vedic rishis belonged to the Brahman caste and that none but Brahmans could claim descent from them. So naturally the non-Brahmans could not have any Pravara of their own. Hence the dictum of Mitakshara following Asvalayana's Srauta Sutra that "a Kshatriya or a Vaisya at the time of sacrifice should recite the Pravara of his priest." "पौरोहित्यान् राजन्यविशां प्रवृणीते इत्याश्वलायन इति मिताक्षरा राजन्यविशां "पुरोहितगोत्रप्रवरौ वेदितव्यौ"—इति रघुनन्दन:। In the case, therefore, of the non-Brahmans, if we agree with the Brahman law-makers, there need not exist any blood relationship between two persons of the same Pravara and same Gotra.

the valley of the Indus. The policy of extermination was followed by one of "depression" and social exclusiveness. What the Sudras gained politically they lost socially. This question of purity of blood, which at first concerned the relationship between the conquerors and the conquered, gradually reacted upon the relations between the different classes of the conquerors themselves and began to poison the whole structure of society.

Thirdly, in course of their advance towards the east and the south, the Aryan conquerors met some savage tribes very low down in the scale of civilization and with revolting habits and standard of living. Evidently there was no love lost between the natives of the plains and the aborigines of the more inaccessible regions who had presumably been driven there by the Dravidian conquerors. The division between the two sections of the conquered population and the loathsome habits of the second group necessitated the creation of a new order, the fifth varna, for them, and raised the question of defilement by touch. This question, too, like the other question of purity of blood, originated in the relation between the conquerors and the conquered, and gradually spread its infection up through all the divisions among the Aryans themselves in the course of centuries till the present rigidity of the caste system in the

matters of inter-marriage and inter-dining was attained.

Fourthly, the large number of slaves acquired in the course of conquest and the larger number of natives reduced to serfdom in the Gangetic valley resulted in the gradual withdrawal of the ruling race from all professions requiring manual labour and the generation of a spirit of contempt for industrial arts, which fell more and more into the hands of the Sudras. Hence partly on account of the intermixture of blood and partly on account of their employment along with Sudras in the industrial professions a large number of the Aryan race were assigned a degraded rank in society. In later times they were classed as so-called mixed castes.

Fifthly, the polygamous spirit of the Vedic Indians and the easy acquisition of female slaves brought a very large number of black women into close association with the white women in the harems and households of the higher classes in society. The frequent appeals of the reformers for the shunning of intercourse with Sudra women were only an index of the prevailing corruption which could not be checked. The practice of associating with slave women had become so extensive that legislators, however much they expressed dislike for it, could not altogether forbid intermarriage even between a Brahman and a Sudra woman. This commingling of white

and black women as co-sharers of the beds of their white lords led to the degradation of the status of women in general so far as the religious rites were concerned. They came to be regarded more as means for pleasure and propagation than as equal partners in life. Gradually they sank to the level of the non-sacrificing Sudras.

Greater rigidity of caste distinctions

While during the Rigvedic period, inspite of the division into classes or castes of a mainly occupational character, the Aryan community retained some homogeneity in ordinary manners and habits, during the following period special rules were prescribed for the guidance of the different castes, which tended by making the different classes conform to different habits, rules of etiquette, etc., to widen the separation between the different castes even among the community of the Aryan conquerors. Thus a Vaisya, for instance, habituated to his prescribed rules of conduct would certainly feel ill at ease if he were promoted to a higher rank and required to adopt a different standard of rules; and so the barriers between the different castes became practically insuperable. The rules were often trivial and innocent-looking, with very little touch of invidiousness about them, and were, therefore, probably not much opposed at the time of their inception. The Satapatha Brahmana prescribes

different sizes of funeral mounds for the four castes (XIII. 8. 3. 11), and lays down different modes of address for them, differing in degrees of politeness, as ehi, agachchha, adrava, adhava, (I. 1. 4. 12). The Aitareya Brahmana (I. 5) directs the Brahmans to use the Gayatri measure, the Kshatriyas Tristubh and the Vaisyas Jagati. The Taittiriya Brahmana (I 1) recommends the spring season to the Brahmans for the performance of sacrifices, the summer to the Kshatriyas, and autumn to the Vaisyas. Of the mystical words prefixed to the Gayatri hymn, the Brahman should pronounce the Bhu, the Kshatriya Bhuvah, and the Vaisya Svah (S. P. Br. II. 1. 3. 4). The Brahmans should use Palasha wood for performing their sprinkling at sacrifices, the Kshatriya Nyagrodha, and the Vaisya Ashvattha (S. P. Br. V. 3. 2. 11). And so on.

Pretensions and Prerogatives of Brahman caste

Another most striking development was the inordinate extension of the pretensions and prerogatives of the sacerdotal class. "The Brahman is lord, not the Rajanya, nor the Vaisya" (Atharvaveda V. 17. 9). "A Brahman is better than a Kshatriya" (Ait. Br. VII. 7). "If the Homa be made upon a Brahman's hand, it is as if made by Agni himself" (Tait. Br. III). Lest there be still any doubt about the superiority of the Brahman caste, the Taittiriya Brahmana (I. 4. 4) declares that "a Brahman is all gods," which is echoed by the

S. P. Brahmana, XII. 4. 4. 6· "The Brahman descended from a Rishi indeed is all deities." India is probably the only country in the world where a particular class of men are given a position higher than that assigned to the gods, not to speak of ordinary human beings. The Atharvaveda (V. 18 and 19) proclaims in the strongest language the sin, peril and ruinous consequences of insulting Brahmans and robbing them of their property. "If men have spat upon a Brahman, they sit (after death) in the middle of a stream running with blood, devouring hair." "Oppressor of the Brahman, the share of water which the gods have destined to be thine is that wherewith men wash the corpse and wet the beard." "The Brahman's cow not restored by a Kshatriya ruins the marriages and all the kinsmen of the Brahman's oppressor. She makes him houseless and homeless, childless, he is extinguished without children to succeed him. Rend to pieces, destroy, destroy him utterly. Destroy, Angiras, the wretch who robs and wrongs the Brahmans." "Even if ten non-Brahman husbands had previously married a woman, and then a Brahman took her by the hand, he is to be her husband, only he; not Vaisya nor Rajanya, the Brahman is her lord" (Atharva. V. 17. 9). "If there be a dispute between a Brahman and a non-Brahman, the king should support the Brahman; if one opposes the Brahman, he opposes himself; therefore one should

not oppose a Brahman" (Tait. Sam. II. 5. 12). "The king shall fine him who abuses a Brahman a hundred (coins); he shall fine him one thousand who strikes a Brahman; he who draws blood from a Brahman shall not see the world of the Fathers (i.e. have no funeral rites performed on his death and thus be eternally damned). (Tait. Sam. II. 6. 11). At the consecration of a king the priest addresses thus: "This man, ye people, is your king; Soma is the king of us Brahmans" (S. P. Br. XI. 5. 7. 1), which means that the Brahmans are not subject to any mortal king.

"The element adverse to a natural growth of morality was above all else, besides the magical interpretation of sacrifice, that caste-feeling which not only deprived the slave of 'god and sacrifice' and made the mere 'people' (that is, the agricultural and mercantile classes) the 'food of kings,' but exalted the priest to the position of a god on earth. Gifts to priests were like gifts to the gods: There are two kinds of divinities, gods and priests; to get to heaven both kinds must be placated. Murder is only 'real murder' when it is committed on the person of a priest. The priest is exempt from capital punishment and from oppression. None may insult or hurt him." (Hopkins, Ethics of India pp. 59-60).

Barriers between Brahmans and Kshatriyas

The separation between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, so far as the priestly functions

were concerned, was complete. There is no Viswamitra in this period passing from the kingly rank to the priestly. The rule that none but a Brahman can act as a priest in sacrifices is definitely laid down. "The gods do not eat the food offered by a king who has no priest." (Ait. Br. VIII. 24). The Brahman was the Hutad offspring (of Prajapati); and the Rajanya, Vaisya and Sudra belonged to the Ahutad. The Brahman was "the eater of the oblation," while the members of the other castes were not so entitled. So much was the profession of a Brahman associated with sacrifices that a Kshatriya was not allowed to take part in a sacrifice in the garb and character of his class, but had to adopt those of a Brahman before entering the sacrifice. (Ait. Br. VII. 14. 19).*

* Some scholars argue from this passage of the Aitareya Brahmana that a Kshatriya at that time could become a Brahman by a change in the mode of life and profession. But the apparent idea in that passage is that a sacrificing Kshatriya, when consecrated, becomes as sacred as a Brahman, and remains so during the period of sacrifice, but certainly not for life. This is clearly stated in S. P. Br. XIII. 4. 1. 3., "whosoever sacrifices does so after having as it were become a Brahman." Otherwise all the sacrificing kings mentioned in the Brahmanas would have become permanently Brahmans on the strength of this passage. A fuller quotation from the Aitareya Brahmana will clearly explain the meaning. "By them the sacrifice began to be conducted. The Brahma and Kshatra came with their instruments. The instruments of the Brahma were the instruments of the sacrifice, and the instruments of the Kshatra were the horse, a chariot, the coat of mail, the arrow and the bow. The Kshatriya was not permitted to enter, and seeing that he could not find entrance he returned. The Brahmans

Not only had the Kshatriyas lost the right of priestly function but they seemed to have lost the right even of appointing and dismissing their priests at will. The Purohitas or family priests were practically irremoveable, which only added to the vested rights of the Brahman priests. When Janamejaya Parikshita ventured to do away with the services of the Kashyapas he was compelled by the Asitamrigas to employ them again (Ait. Br. VII. 27). Vishvantara Saushadmana after driving away the Shyaparnas from his sacrifice had to call them back under pressure (Ait. Br. VII. 27. 3 et seq.). That the relation between the king and his Purohita came to be regarded as a permanent one is also shown in the ritual laid down in the Aitareya Brahmana (VIII. 27), where the Purohita stands in the same relationship to the king as a wife to the husband.

Moreover, such was the development of the mechanical and magical side of the sacrifices that the sacrificer was hopelessly at the mercy of the sacrificing priests. If the priest so wished, he could by manipulation bring ruin

stood to oppose the entrance of others. *The Brahmans came with their instruments. Therefore the sacrifice is established in the Brahmans.* Afterwards the Kshatriyas came and asked to be called for the sacrifice. Then the Brahmans said to them, 'If you wish to come to the sacrifice, you must put aside your own instruments, and become like Brahmans (brahmanorupena), and then come to the sacrifice.' The Kshatriyas said 'Be it so.' After putting aside their own instruments, and taking the instruments of the Brahma, they became like Brahmans and entered the sacrifice." (VII. 14. 19).

upon the sacrificer's senses, his life, and his earthly possessions. At the same time the priests also had to be expert and careful in their profession as the slightest errors would recoil on their own heads. Thus a priest, Bhallaveya, broke his arm by making an error in the sacrifice (S. P. Br. 1. 7. 3. 19). Another priest, Ashadhi Saushromateya, lost his life by doing his work at a sacrifice in a haphazard way (S. P. Br. VI. 2. 1. 37).*

Inspite of the high pretensions and claims of supernatural powers of the Brahmans in general, and the Purohitas in particular, in the priestly literature, it is reasonable to assume that their position was not established all in a day and that the Kshatriya kings did not always tamely submit to the superiority

* "Eggling (S. B. E. vol. XII. p. 10) recalls the fact that among the ancient Romans, too, the Pontifices gained their power and influence through being the only people who understood all the details of the sacrificial ceremonial, which details, though small, had yet been declared tremendously important. It happened in ancient Rome that a sacrifice had to be repeated thirty times, because some little mistake had been made at one of the ceremonies; and in ancient Rome, too, a ceremony was regarded as null and void, if a word was mispronounced or an act was not performed quite correctly, or if the music did not cease playing at the right moment." (Winternitz, Hist. of Ind. Lit.). What was abnormal in India was that the sacrifice, which had been in the Rigveda, as in other countries, a means to an end, viz., the gaining of the good will of the gods, was in the Brahmanas an end in itself, the highest aim of existence, the gods themselves being of no account. The creative and motive force of Nature, according to the Brahmana theory, lies not with the gods but with the sacrifice, though the sacrifice might be in the name of one or other of the gods.

complex of the Brahmans. The stories of such struggles were either weeded out in later times from the priestly literature or clothed in such a garb as only to prove the foolishness and futility of these unholy efforts. "The Srinjayas, descendants of Vitahavya, waxed exceedingly, they almost touched the sky, but after they had injured Bhrigu, they were overwhelmed." (Atharva. V. 19. 1). The Panchavimsa Brahmana (XIV. 6. 8) relates the story of Kutsa Aurava slaying his Purohita, Upagu Saushravasa, for worshipping a god to whom the king was hostile. The same book (XIII. 3. 12) also describes a dispute between the king Tryaruna Traidhatva Aikshvaka and his Purohita Vrisha Jana when the car driven by them ran over and killed a Brahman boy. The king threw the blame upon the Purohita, who had to recall the boy to life. From the Greek accounts and Kautilya's Arthasastra (Bk. I Chaps. IX and X) we learn that even as late as the 4th century B. C. the kings possessed the right of appointing and dismissing their Purohitas and were not bound to consider their hereditary claims. But once installed the Purohita was to be respected and obeyed by the king "as a teacher by the student, a father by the son, a master by the servant."

Kshatriyas and Philosophical Literature

The kingly class in all civilized communities must be a cultured body, and we have

seen how during the earlier Vedic period many of them were patrons of poets, and sometimes poets themselves, whose poems have gained a high place in the hymn-literature When in the later Vedic period, however, the older hymns came to be regarded as revealed ones, and new hymns were not to be accepted by the Brahman priests, all activities in the direction of poetical compositions, with the exception of sacrificial Gatha verses, stopped. At the same time the literature of the Brahmanas, the classifications and commentaries of the hymns, the directions for worship, etc., became an exclusive monopoly of the priestly class It seemed as if the kingly class would be entirely shut out of all religious literature in the capacity of an independent thinker, an author, or a teacher. But fortunately for them a new avenue was opened in the religious literature in which the Rajanyas could compete without handicap and without obstruction with the Brahman scholars on an equal footing. This was the new science of Upanishad or metaphysical speculation on God and Soul. Thanks to India being the meeting-place of three, if not four, entirely different cultures, Munda, Dravidian, Mongolian and Aryan, neither of which could be entirely extinguished, a spirit of toleration, mutual give and take, was bound to grow in her religious thoughts and practices. Hence the Brahmanic religion never became

dogmatic, and did not look upon the new science of philosophy with the eye of a step-mother, while in most other lands theology and philosophy were kept rigidly separated from each other to the detriment of both. Now in this new science the Rajanyas made their mark and became equal, if not superior, to the Brahmans. Well-known Brahman sages like Balaki Gargya, Uddalaka Aruni, Somasushma Satyayajni acknowledged their inferiority, and were glad to receive teachings from kings like Ajatasatru of Kashi, Asvapati of Kekaya, Pravahana Jaibali of Panchala and Janaka of Videha.*

It is difficult to believe, as is done by some scholars, that the Kshatriyas created the science of philosophy as a revolt against the sacrificial ritualism of the Brahmans. The seeds of the doctrines of the Upanishads,

* The Satapatha Brahmana XI. 6.2 gives an account of how the three Brahman sages, Svetaketu Aruneya, Somasushma Satyayajni and Yajnavalkya, failed to answer satisfactorily a philosophical question which was eventually explained by King Janaka. The Chhandogya Upanishad V. 3 describes how Pravahana Jaibali, a Kshatriya king, imparted the knowledge of Brahma to the Brahman sage Gautama. We find in the S. P. Br. X. 6. I. and Ch. Up. V. 11 that five Brahman scholars approached the sage Uddalaka Aruni, who failing to solve their problem took them to King Asvapati who gave them the required instruction. A story is told in the Kaushitaki Upanishad IV of how Gargya Balaki, a famous Brahman scholar of the time, boastfully challenged King Ajatasatru of Kashi but was defeated, and finally acquired the true knowledge as a pupil from the king.

those of Karma and Atman-Brahman, are to be found in the Brahmanas and even in the Rigveda, and the development of those doctrines from the earlier Vedic age is logical and continuous. Nor can we agree with scholars like Hopkins who hold that the authors of these doctrines were Brahmans, "in whose debates, however, the Rajas of the day probably took the condescending interest customary to cultured royalty and in which, when they took part, they were credited with victory." It is very curious that the Brahman writers of later times, who did not possess a strong sense of historical accuracy, and who did not preserve a true account of even the Brahman founders of special sciences, most of them being attributed to divine or semi-divine beings, should take so much care to preserve the names of historical Kshatriya princes as teachers of Upanishad philosophy. On the contrary, it is expected that if contemporary Brahman scholars had shown a spirit of generosity in associating the names of patron-princes with their works, later Brahman writers would have eliminated these references as being derogatory to their dignity. As a matter of fact, the Kshatriya authorship of some of the philosophical texts was not a courtesy title, but was too real to be possible of oblivion even in later tradition. Yajnavalkya's language is significant when he dissuaded the other indignant Brahman sages

from challenging King Janaka to a debate: "We are Brahmans, but he is only a Kshatriya. If we defeat him, whom shall we say that we have defeated? But if he overcome us the people would say, 'A Kshatriya has defeated the Brahmans.' Do not do such a thing."

After the end of the hymn-making period, for sometime only Brahmans had become rishis or sages, but now some kings attained that distinction under the title of Rajarshi or king-sage. This new learning, therefore, stopped at least for the time being the downward passage of the Kshatriya caste in relation to the Brahman. If with it we take into account the temporal power of the kingly class as against the spiritual claims of the Brahmans, it may be said that, whatever might be the barriers between the two castes, neither attained an acknowledged superiority over the other. The following passage from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1. 4) may be cited as a refreshing contrast to the numerous passages in the earlier literature asserting the absolute superiority of the Brahman caste. "It (Brahma) energetically created an excellent form, the Kshatra, viz., those among the gods who are powers, Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu, Ishana. Hence nothing is superior to the Kshatra. Therefore the Brahman sits below the Kshatriya at the Rajasuya sacrifice."

Gradual sinking of the Vaisya

The position of the Vaisyas had become much lower during the later Vedic period, and we need not travel far to find its causes. (1) As the ruling class became more numerous and, therefore, more self-constituted, and as with the rapid expansion of Aryan domain the society advanced more from tribalism towards feudalism and oligarchism, the difference between the Kshatriyas, or the Indian eorls, and the Vaisyas, or the Indian ceorls, became wider, and the position of the latter sank lower and lower, as happened in the later Anglo-Saxon society.

(2) To make matters worse in India, the sacerdotal class had already become entirely separated from the common people, and, instead of uniting with the commoners against the growing power of the ruling class, joined hands with the latter to secure their own position and lord it over the people in common. Thus the Vaisya, according to the Taittiriya Samhita VII. 1. 1, existed for being 'consumed', i.e. exploited by the priests and warriors. Numerous passages attest to the inferiority of the Vaisyas to the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas (Tait. Sam. II. 5. 10. 1; Kath. Sam. XXIX. 10; S. P. Br. VI. 4. 4. 13; Ait. Br. II. 33. 1; Panch. Br. II. 8. 2).

(3) With the more abundant supply of slaves in the Gangetic valley, the Aryan masters, like the Romans in the 2nd century

B.C., had begun to extensively employ slave labour in all toilsome work, in farming, in pasturing and in industrial arts. The greater association of slave or Sudra labour with certain branches of industry, together with the growing contempt for manual labour, brought the industries themselves low in the estimation of the higher classes, and made those engaged therein, even of pure Aryan birth, approximate more to their Sudra associates and fellow-workmen. The first notice of such a marked degradation is found in the S. P. Brahmana (I. 1. 3. 12) where a carpenter's (Takshan) touch is said to impart ceremonial impurity. The Rathakaras, or chariot-makers, began to appear as a special caste, apart from the Vaisyas in general, though still enjoying a good position in society.

From the Vajasaneyi Samhita (XXX. 6, 7) and the Atharvaveda (III. 5. 6) we learn that the Rathakaras occupied a position of importance in society. In the Satapatha Brahmana (XIII. 4. 2. 17), too, the Rathakara is regarded as a person of good standing. The Taittiriya Brahmana (I. 1. 4. 8) lays down rules for the placing of the sacrificial fire not only for the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, but also for the Rathakaras. The mention of such professional castes as Rathakara, Takshan, Karmara, separately from the Vaisya community in general, marks the beginning of the process of degradation and elimination till in

the next period we find them put outside the Aryan circle and classed entirely with the Sudras. The result was at first a division between those Vaisyas whose professions were regarded as honourable and those whose professions were rather looked down upon. The former retained some sort of homogeneity as regards their social rank, while the latter were treated, group by group, according as the occupation of each was regarded as more or less impure. Thus, for instance, no distinction was made between a Vaisya merchant and a Vaisya farmer in the Brahmanas, but a Takshan (carpenter) was evidently looked upon as more impure than a Rathakara (chariot-maker), though both originated from the Rigvedic Vaisya community. In the next period, when greater discriminations were made about occupations, a Vaisya farmer was treated as inferior to a Vaisya merchant, and in the Jataka literature the merchants alone formed what might be called the Vaisya community of the time, the others having sunk down to the rank of Sudras.

(4) During the Rigvedic period all the professions and industries of the community had been in the hands of the Aryans and so none of them were regarded as dishonourable. But with the more commingling of the conquering Aryan and the conquered non-Aryan races, the industrial and economic life of the people was vastly expanded. A very large

number of occupations are found in the Purushamedha Adhyaya of the White Yajurveda, among which some, like the fishing and hunting occupations, belonged evidently to despised non-Aryan tribes. There were other occupations in which, thanks to the inherent skill of the Dravidian artisans, the Aryans could not establish themselves at all. Thus a number of the poor class people, apart from the domestic slaves, were in the society of the later Samhitas and Brahmanas not Aryans at all and were not treated as such, though they formed outwardly a part of the community of freemen in general.

(5) When the problem of black peril and the question of purity of blood arose, the cultured and ruling classes naturally followed a policy of racial segregation and refrained from inter-marriages as a general rule with non-Aryan peoples. But the rank and file of the community, the Vaisyas, owing to their number and diversity, to their want of proper understanding, and, above all, to the close association into which they came with the Sudras in various fields of work, could not but receive a large intermixture of non-Aryan blood. The proud higher classes, therefore, began to adopt a more exclusive policy towards the proletarians of the community, tainted that they were with black blood. "Such conditions must be

granted; they belong to the ethics of an aristocracy consisting of a small number of whites surrounded by a huge circle of blacks of inferior mental and moral status, more or less intermixed with a large class of 'poor white trash' Aryans who, through long association with the blacks as labourers and toilers at various sorts of handiwork, were far removed from the wealthy classes and the real aristocrats, the noblemen and the priests." (Hopkins, Ethics of India).

Uplifting of the Sudra

As the Vaisyas were descending in the social scale the Sudras as a class were rising higher and approximating more to the position of the Vaisyas. During the Rigvedic period they were mostly war-captives and hence slaves, pure and simple. But in the Gangetic plains it was not captured individuals only but often whole tribes reduced to subjection who became Sudras. So the word came to mean the non-Aryans in general. In the later Vedic literature the Sudra is often contrasted with the Arya, instead of the Dasa or Dasyu of the Rigveda.* Thus the rishi in the Atharvaveda XIX. 62. 1 says, "Make me dear to gods, dear to princes, dear to everyone who beholds

* "Oh Indra, object of our praises, let the godless, whether he be an Arya or a Dasyu, who wages war against us, be vanquished by us." (Rig. VII. 8. 14). "I,

me, both to Sudra and to Arya." Again, in IV. 20. 4, "By it I see everything, whether the Sudra or the Arya."* Moreover, the greater association of the Sudras in those professions which had been the monopoly of the Vaisyas in the Rigvedic period, and the greater intermixture of blood which took place in the rank and file of the population, naturally tended to lessen the distinction between the Vaisyas and the Sudras. Again, we know that where there has been admiration familiarity breeds contempt, but that where there has been contempt familiarity turns down contempt. The hated Dasas with their ugliness, different creeds and languages, manners and customs, began to be more familiarly treated when they became domestic slaves, and somewhat initiated into the habits and usages of their Aryan masters. Thus from the third book of the Taittiriya Brahmana we know that the Sudra was already entrusted with some function, viz., to watch the property, in one of the most important and sacred rites of the Aryans, the Asvamedha sacrifice. A passage from the Taittiriya Samhita still more clearly shows that the Sudra had gained a recognised position in society, being worthy of being prayed for in respect of his welfare by a Brahman

* "At the Mahavrata festival of the winter solstice an Aryan and a Sudra strove over a white round skin, which is stated to be a symbol of the sun; the Aryan conquers

sage, and was almost bracketted together with the Vaisya. "Bestow splendour on our Brahmans; bestow splendour on our nobles; bestow splendour on our Vaisyas and Sudras, bestow splendour over splendour on me." (V. 7. 6. 4). That the Sudras were allowed to take part in some sacrifices is indicated by the form of address to be made to him by the priest, "Run hither," as given in the S. P. Brahmana I. 1. 4. 11. In the same book (XIII. 8. 3. 11) a Sudra appears at the Pitrimedha sacrifice. The Chhandogya Upanishad (IV. 2) relates a story about a Brahman sage giving religious instruction to a Sudra, accepting rich presents and his daughter from him.* This and the case of Satyakama Jabala were no doubt exceptional ones, which show that human element sometimes did override considerations of caste even in relation to the Sudras.

Sudra still an alien

Yet there was a limit beyond which the Sudra, whatever might be his adaptibility and fidelity, would not be allowed to step. Whatsoever might be the degradation of the Vaisya, he was still of the Aryan community, and in solemn sacred ceremonies there could not be any thought of his equality with the Sudra.

* "तं हाभ्युवाद रैक्वेदं सहस्रं गवामयं निष्कोऽयमश्वतरीरथ इयं जायाऽयं ग्रामो यस्मिन्नास्सेऽन्वेव मा भगवः शाधीति। तस्या ह मुखमुपोद्गृह्णन्नुवाचाजहारेमाः शूद्र अनेनैव मुखेनालापयिष्यथा इति ते हैते रैक्वपर्णा नाम महावृषेषु यत्रास्मा उवास

Though the Sudra could be present at the Asvamedha sacrifice in the capacity of a watchman, the privilege of abhisheka (ritual sprinkling) must not be given to him and he was not to be admitted to the *sala* or hall of sacrifice. The right of initiation belonged to the Brahman, Rajanya and Vaisya, but never to the Sudra (S. P. Br. III. 1. 2. 10). He is definitely declared as "unfit for sacrifice" (*ayajniya*) in the S. P. Brahmana (III. 1. 1. 10) and Panchavimsa Brahmana (VI. 1. 11). The Kathaka Samhita (XI. 10) excludes the Sudra from the right of drinking Soma at sacrifices. "At religious ceremonies the Sudra can perform only the washing of the feet of persons of the higher castes, for he is created out of the feet of Prajapati." (Tait. Sam. VII. 1. 1). He was a despised creature who must not be spoken to by a consecrated man at a sacrifice. "Every one cannot obtain this, for the gods do not associte with every man, but an Arya, a Brahman or a Kshatriya or a Vaisya, for these can sacrifice. Nor should one talk with everybody, for the gods do not talk with every body, but only with an Arya, a Brahman or a Kshatriya or a Vaisya, for these can sacrifice. If any one have occasion to speak to a Sudra, let him say to another person, 'Tell this man so and so.' This is the rule for an initiated man." (S. P. Br. III. 1. 1). While the Brahman is of the class of the gods the Sudra is of the asuras

no sacrifice" (Panch. Br. VI. 1. 11). Some sort of ceremonial impurity was ascribed to the touch of a Sudra on certain sacred and solemn occasions. "Let not a Sudra milk it out For this Sudra has sprung from non-existence. They say that what a Sudra milks out is no oblation. Let not a Sudra milk out the Agnihotra. For they do not purify that." (Tait. Br. III. 2. 3). This sentiment is to be found in a stronger form in later literatures, as, for instance, the Harivamsa (11820-25) says, "The Sudras, produced from non-existence, are destitute of rites. Hence they are not entitled to be admitted to the purificatory ceremonies, nor does sacred knowledge belong to them." On the whole, the rank assigned to the Sudra was more or less that of a domestic servant and a menial labourer, who was treated with some consideration mixed with contempt, but who could never attain the rights and privileges of an Aryan freeman.

Fifth Varna

In the Nishadas, Chandalas and Paulkasas, the earliest mention of whom is to be found in the Yajurveda, we can discern, whatever may be said about their mixed origin in the Dharmasastras, true specimens of savage races, who had been on a very low culture-level, lived in a repulsively dirty fashion and followed the primitive professions of hunting

conquering Aryans. So little amenable to culture were they, and such abhorrence did they generate in the minds of the Aryans, and also probably of the more cultured sections of the non-Aryans, that a wall of separation was raised between the men of society and these wild peoples, and they came to form the so-called casteless castes whose occupations were those which would not be followed by the higher classes. The humanitarian idea of elevating by slow and laborious work the culture-level and the standard of life of these unfortunate peoples was either under the circumstances impracticable or did not occur to the missionaries of the time. The great contempt with which these peoples were treated becomes somewhat explicable if we remember that, besides being of extremely dirty habits and low culture, they belonged to a Pre-Dravidian stock, probably Munda-Monkhmer race, who had remained unabsorbed by the Dravidians, and had been treated as pariahs even by the latter.* This spirit of contempt existed among the Aryanised Dravidians and was taken up from them by the Aryans. This feature of the caste system was evidently not a part of the original Indo-Aryan institutions, but was a thing borrowed from the Dravidians, among whom in the South even in modern

* Prof. Przyluski in his article Les Udumbara, Journal Asiatique, 1926, pp. 25-36, suggests a Pre-Dravidian origin of the modern low-caste Dom.

times untouchability plays such a prominent part.

Of these pariah peoples the Nishadas were the first to be met by the Aryans. They are mentioned in the Rudradhyaya of the Yajur veda. The Mahabharata in the XIIth book gives a fanciful account of the origin of the Nishadas (from *nishida*, sit, which the rishis said to the man who had come out of the pierced thigh of Vena), and describes them as short-limbed, of the complexion of charred wood, with blood-red eyes—a description to which is added high cheek-bones, low-topped nose, and copper-coloured hair by the Bhagavata Purana (IV. 14. 44). Their habitat was the hills and forests of the Vindhya ranges, and so the Indo-Aryans came into contact with them as early as in the later Samhita period. So great was the distinction between the conquered Dravidians and the Nishadas that in the Brahmana period the former were generally classed as Sudras while the latter were called the fifth caste (Nirukta III. 8; Brihaddevata VII. 69). But in course of time as the Aryans advanced further east they came across other peoples, like the Chandalas, Paulkasas, etc., of similar characteristics and yet too varied to be classed under one head. The Nishadas, Chandalas, etc., originally denoted only unclean savage tribes living in hills and forests outside settled habitations. When a son was born of the most hated union between a

only because the gods had shown him special favour (Ait. Br. II. 19; Kaush. Br. XII. 1. 3). A similar fate met Vatsa, who had to prove his Brahmanical descent by walking unharmed through fire (Panch. Br. XIV. 6. 6). These cases show that opinion was getting strong against intermarriage between Brahmans and Sudras, and that the issues of such marriages had some difficulty in obtaining places in their fathers' rank. Cases of illicit intercourse with slave girls were not uncommon among the Vedic sages (Vaj. Saṁ. XXIII. 31; Tait. S. VII. 4. 19), and in such cases the offspring naturally took the rank of their mothers. A well-known exception was Satyakama Jabala, who was accepted as a Brahman because of his high character and intellect, though born of an unmarried slave woman.* Separate castes for the children of mixed marriages, as to be found in the next period, were not yet recognised during the Brahmana period. This state of

* The story as given in the Chhandogya Upanishad (IV. 4) is as follows. Satyakama going to Gautama Haridrumata said to him, "I wish to become a Brahmachari with you, Sir. May I come to you, Sir?" He inquired, "Of what family are you, my friend?" Satyakama replied, "I do not know, Sir, of what family I am. I asked my mother, and she answered, 'In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant (waiting on the guests in my master's house) I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama.' I am, therefore, Satyakama Jabala, Sir." He said to him, "No one but a true Brahman would thus speak out. Go and fetch fuel, friend, I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth."

things was obviously in mind when Parasara said (Mhb. Santi, 296), "Munis or sages who had begotten sons in an indiscriminate way conferred on them the position of rishis by their extraordinary power." That even the higher castes absorbed a good deal of non-Aryan blood on account of the absence of strict marriage regulations when the Gangetic plains were being conquered and Aryanised is proved by their lower nose and shorter stature than in the Punjab. Whatever scruples there might have been in admitting the son of a Sudra mother by a Brahman father into the Brahman caste, the children of Kshatriya and Vaisya mothers unquestioningly took the rank of their Brahman fathers. The Mahabharata (Anushasana, ch. 47) declares, "A son of a Brahman by a Sudra woman is regarded as a non-Brahman, while the children of a Brahman father born of Kshatriya and Vaisya women are Brahmans. According to the Shastras there are four varnas, and no fifth."

Standard of sexual morality

The rules of sexual morality naturally were not very high among the people of the time, and the sages and law-givers of the period took a more lenient view of the human weaknesses. As Yajnavalkya states in the S. P. Brahmana (I. 3. 2. 21), "Let the prescribed rule be followed regarding a wife. Who would mind his wife consorting with other men?"

In the procedure regarding the offering of Varunapraghasa oblation, as described in the S. P. Brahmana II. 5. 2. 20, it is laid down: "The pratiprasthari (one of the priests) returns. Being about to bring forward the wife, he asks her, 'with what (paramour) dost thou keep company?' For it is an offence incurring punishment from Varuna that being the wife of one man she keeps company with another. He enquires, 'in order that she may not sacrifice with me while she feels an inward pang.' For a sin when declared becomes less: for it is not attended with falsehood. Therefore he enquires. If she does not confess, it will be ill for her relations." An unfaithful wife was not, therefore, even excluded from the sacred rites by the side of her husband, the only injunction being a confession of her unlicensed amours. That illicit intercourses were not rare at the time, and that they had to be particularly forbidden for some special occasions, is attested by the Taittiriya Samhita V. 6. 8. 3: "Let not a man, after preparing the altar for the sacred fire, approach a Sudra woman, because in doing so he would be discharging seed into an improper place. Let no man, after a second time preparing the fire-altar, approach another man's wife." The Nidana Sutra (III. 8) knowing the conditions of the time states that it is impossible for a son to declare his father or for a father to declare his son. "Women are irregular in their conduct. Of whatsoever

men, I, taking gods and men to witness, shall declare myself to be the son, I shall be their son; and they whom I shall name as my sons shall be so." The following hymn, as given in the Sankhayana Grihya Sutra III. 13. 5 and Hiranyakesin II. 4. 10, which had to be recited by a sacrificer at sacrifices to the Fathers, betrays a state of society when unfaithful wives were not rare. "Wherein my mother has done amiss, going astray, faithless to her husband, that sperm may my father take as his own, may another one fall off from the mother." Even the most virtuous Yudhisthira admits in the Mahabharata, Vanaparva, 180, "Birth is difficult to decide in the present condition of humanity, on account of the confusion of all castes. All sorts of men are continually begetting children on all sorts of women. Hence the Vedic text, 'We know this, whether we are Brahmans or no Brahmans. We, whoever we are, recite the hymn.'"

According to the Mahabharata (Adiparva, 122) there was a time in India when the society was polyandrous, and the people were not of strict morals. A sage, named Svetaketu, son of Uddalaka, was very much pained to see his own mother a victim of the existing custom, and laid down the law of strict matrimonial chastity. The story is in all likelihood a fanciful one, and yet it may be reminiscent of a period of promiscuousness among the

Vedic Indians. The association of the name of Svetaketu, son of Uddalaka, with the reform movement proves that the period referred to was not of a very remote past, as Svetaketu is a prominent person in the later Vedic literature, and is represented in Apastamba's Dharma Sutra (I. 2. 5) as belonging to the Avaras, or men of later times when no Rishis were born. Another story with such pointed reference to a chaotic state of society in the Vedic period is that of the sage Dirghatamas, son of Uchatha and Mamata, as given in the Mahabharata (Adiparva, 104). His uncle cohabiting with his mother when she was with Dirghatamas in her womb in consequence of which the child became permanently blind, the throwing of the blind rishi into the river by his disgusted wife with her desires unsatisfied, and the appointment of the luckily saved sage by the impotent king Bali to raise children for him in the womb of his queen, all point to a state of society when chastity in the modern sense of the word had not become the rule. And it is Dirghatamas who is said to have decreed that the wife must remain faithful to, and dependent upon, one husband only, alive or dead, and must not marry a second time—the earliest prohibition of the remarriage of widows according to tradition.* That

* एक एव पतिर्नार्या यावज्जीवपरायणम् ।
मृते जीवति वा तस्मिन्नापरं प्राप्नुयान्नरम् ॥

at least some part of the story is true is known from the parallel account in the Brihaddevata (IV. 11 et seq) of the sage Dirghatamas and the slave girl Usij, and also from the obscure language of the hymn 158 of the first book of the Rigveda which seems to indicate the various sufferings and vicissitudes of fortune from which the Asvins saved Dirghatamas

The above stories and extracts are mentioned for two reasons. Firstly, to show that long after the practical separation of castes had taken place the intermixture of blood, both openly and surreptitiously, between the castes was continuing on a not small scale, and that after centuries of such intermixture it is idle to speculate what percentage of blood the modern Brahmans have inherited from the so-called founders of Gotras and Pravaras. Of course, in the later Brahmanical literature with its strong hierarchical bias the male agencies in all illicit intercourses are always represented to be Brahmans. But it would be going against the grain of nature to believe in the truth of these pretensions and in the assumption that there was a method in moral lapses and aberrations. And we cannot forget that the Brahmans were physically the weakest and the most helpless members of society who were more likely to be preyed upon than contrariwise. That other castes did not always show great respect for the marital beds of Brahmans is clearly referred to in Rig. X. 109.

The Brahman husband needed all the more protection when in an age of rather lax morality the wife of a poor scholar and priest might find the temptation too much from a princely Rajanya or a rich Vaisya or even from a sneaky, suave Sudra domestic slave, especially when the wife herself might have come from the rank of the tempter. The case of Matanga, son of a Brahman lady by a barber paramour and yet passing as the son of the Brahman husband for a time, does not stand alone in Pauranic tradition to bear testimony to illicit connections between higher-caste women and lower-caste paramours (Mbh. Anushasana, 27). Frequent cases are met with in Pauranic literature of sexual immorality even among the wives of sages, and they exercised little discrimination in the choice of persons to whom they offered themselves, as in the story of Veda and Utanka, in which the wife of the Guru Veda made amorous approaches to the disciple Utanka during the absence of her husband and was none the worse for it in the eyes of the latter (Mbh. Adi. 3).

Secondly, to show that the standard of sexual morality being not yet very high among the Brahmans of the later Vedic period they had not arrived at that stage when a Brahman life was looked upon as a model for imitation by the other classes and when the acknowledged superiority of the Brahman caste was due as much to their spiritual pretensions as

to their higher standard of morality. Thus the sage Apastamba, who lived not very far removed from the period of the Brahmanas and who must have been in possession of traditions about the lives and characters of many of the Vedic sages, remarks, "Transgression of the law and violence are found amongst the ancient sages. They committed no sin on account of the greatness of their lustre. A man of later times, who seeing their deeds follows them, falls." (Ap. II. 5. 13). Even in his time there was a proverb which was said to be a statement of fact that "a learned Brahman and a he-goat are the most sensual beings." (II. 6. 14 13).* "A painful light is shed on priestly morality by the story of Yavakri, who was wont to summon to him any woman at pleasure, though intercourse with him meant death. He ultimately was slain by a Gandharva, after an Apsaras had been substituted for the wife of Yajnavacas, and after in madness he had cut off the heads of his cattle." (Keith).

Growing puritanical spirit

But things were changing. Svetaketu and Dirghatamas might or might not be pioneer reformers in the matter, but there is no doubt about some reform movements occurring from time to time during the later Vedic

* "बस्तश्च श्रोत्रियश्च स्त्रीकामतमाविति"

period which condemned polyandry except in the case of Niyoga, and greatly restricted consanguineous connections, the source of much evil in family life, by prohibiting marriage within three or four degrees of the parents and finally marriage within the Gotra. Niyoga, or raising up children in the womb of the wife of an impotent or dead man, was still one great weak spot in the laws of marriage of the time. In consequence of this growing puritan spirit in society we find cases of disinclination or objection to perform such Vedic ceremonies as involved gross immoralities and bestialities. Thus king Janaka of Videha refused to carry out the Gosava rite which required incest with the sacrificer's nearest relatives (Jaim. Br. II. 113).

Niyoga and Polyandry

In later times with the moral advancement of society the practice of Niyoga was hedged round with so many restrictions that it practically amounted to the raising of an issue as a case of necessity for the preservation of a family from extinction. In the law-books it is looked upon as more or less an act of duty in which the feelings of the parties were not concerned. But in the earlier or Brahmana period the Niyoga was only a restricted form of polyandry freely indulged in by the parties with as much display of passion and zest as the consciousness of performing a

duty. Pauranic traditions contain numerous cases in which Niyoga is represented, and not disapprovingly, as more a matter of illicit amour and satisfaction of lust than an act of austere duty. Thus no doubt Kunti exceeded the limit of necessity by having three sons by different fathers. Dirghatamas had to live long years in the harem of King Bali to raise seventeen sons for him. Madayanti, the queen of Kalmasapada, was practically given away to Vasistha for a period. Saradandayani made her choice of a man by whom she obtained three sons. If to such cases we add those of Kanina and similar issues, like Karna, Kamsa, Vyasa, Ekalavya and others, it may be presumed that a restricted form of polyandry was legally recognised and was widely prevalent even among the highest classes in the time of the Brahmanas. At the Asvamedha sacrifice the wives of the royal sacrificer were sometimes demanded by the priests as fees, and the Adhvaryu apparently obtained the fourth wife of the sacrificer and also a daughter in wedlock.

Position of woman in Brahmana period

The Brahman sages in the later Samhitas and Brahmanas evinced a brutal spirit towards the weaker sex and impressed a permanent mark of degradation upon the position of women. Of course, in almost all primitive societies woman is more or less regarded as

property and a female child is not much favoured because she does not contribute to the fighting strength of the community. Yet it is to be deplored that the position of woman in India has suffered a great decline since the Rigvedic period, and this has gone hand in hand with the increasing severity of caste rules and ceremonial purity. First of all, probably on account of the large accession of black non-Aryan female element into the harems and households of the Vedic Aryans in the second stage of their conquest,—captured native women either as concubines or as wives, the line of distinction not being broad in those days of loose matrimonial rules,—women in general came to be associated with ceremonial impurity, an idea unknown in the days of the Rigveda. Hence the grouping together of a woman and a Sudra in the Brahmana literature as embodying impurity (S. P. Br. XIV. 1. 1. 31).

Secondly, with the growth of royal power, the development of privileged aristocratic classes, the formation of fairly extensive monarchies with stately court life, and the conquest and subjection of teeming black population whose womenfolk were at the mercy of the conquerors, the polygamous spirit of the earlier Vedic period was but on the increase. Westermarck and other scholars have shown that polygamy generally succeeds, and not precedes, monogamy in the

evolution of human society. It is true at least in Vedic India that the spirit of polygamy was much greater in the Brahmana period than in that of the Rigveda. The Satapatha Brahmana supports polygamy and gives a religious explanation of it (IX. 1. 4. 6). Manu of the Maitrayani Samhita (I. 5. 8) had ten wives. Ordinarily four wives were attached to a king, whose names were in succession Mahishi, Parivrikti, Vavata and Palagali (S. P. Br. XIII. 2. 6. 4-6).

The wife as Patni in her capacity of partnership with the lord husband (Pati) recedes into the background and the idea of Jaya for bearing children for the husband becomes more prominent. The wife is called "the half of man," but why? "Because as long as he has no wife, so long he does not propagate his species, so long he is no complete individual; but when he has a wife, then he propagates his species, then he is complete." (S. P. Br. V. 2. 1. 10). The Maitrayani Samhita is very outspoken in its attitude towards women: "Woman is Nirriti (i.e. Evil personified)." "Verily the sacrifice is right and truth, woman is something wrong and lack of truth." (I. 10. 11. 16). The same book expressly forbids women to go to assemblies and take part in public life (IV. 7. 4). "Woman is the inferior part of the sacrifice; she is ritually impure and must be covered with a girdle." (S. P. Br. I. 3. 1. 12-13). "Even if many women

are together and there is but a small boy, he takes precedence of them all." (I. 3. 1. 9). Gradually the wife was displaced from her position of partnership with the husband at sacrifices and in many of the ceremonies the priest came to occupy her place to form the pair with the sacrificer (S. P. Br. I. 1. 4. 13). She also lost the right of sharing the same table at meals with her husband and was now required to eat after him (S P. Br. I. 9. 2. 12, X. 5. 2. 9).

A woman was devoid of the right of owning property; even her own person must be the property of a man. The ritualistic explanation for the bondage of woman and her incapacity to inherit property is given in the S. P. Brahmana (IV. 4. 2. 13): "With the thunderbolt, the butter, the gods beat and weakened their wives; and thus beaten and weakened they had no right whatever to their own bodies or to an heritage." Woman is regarded as a source of unhappiness and is said to have been given by the gods to man along with the evils of sleep, sloth, anger, hunger and love of gambling to torment him (Jaim. Br. I. 98). The Aitareya Brahmana describes "what a man gains by having a son" thus: "The father, who looks upon the face of his son, born living unto him, discharges his debt in him, attains to immortality through him...the son is to him a rescuing boat...in him ye have the blameless world of heaven. The daughter

is a sorrow, while the son is light in the highest regions of heaven to his father." (VIII. 13-18). It is therefore that the Atharvaveda prescribes charms for changing the foetus into a male child (VI. 11). Unlike the Rigveda which makes equal distribution of praise and blame to woman, the Brahmanas contain few tales of wifely devotion and remarks about the worth of good women to offset the pervading cynical tone.*

Inspite of such deprecatory and ribald remarks about women in the Brahmanas and of their legal incapacity to hold personal property, their condition was in some respects still better than in later times. Firstly, woman was not yet entirely debarred from participation in the most sacred rituals. She could not act as a priest at sacrifices, but she as wife must be the companion of the sacrificer at some of the most important of the sacrifices. For example, at the Vajapeya sacrifice when the husband ascends a ladder resting against the sacrificial stake he must be accompanied

* "The exposure of girl infants is asserted by Zimmer on the strength of a passage in the Kathaka Samhita, but it seems clear that the passage has been misunderstood and that it refers merely to laying the child aside, not exposing it, while a boy was lifted up. It is, however, true that the birth of a girl was not at all popular, not an unnatural sentiment in an early society, and paralleled among other Aryan peoples." (Vedic Index I. 395).

by his wife, "whom he addresses in the following words: 'Wife, let us ascend to heaven,' and the wife answers: 'yes, let us ascend.'" (S. P. Br. V. 2. 1. 10).

Secondly, though the ceremony of initiation was not for women, they were not forbidden to study the sacred texts and to become learned persons. Like the Kshatriyas of the period who were excluded from the work of a priest, they devoted themselves less to the liturgical literature and more to philosophical studies and speculations. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we find the great sage Yajnavalkya instructing his wife Maitreyi in the highest knowledge of Brahma and Atman. In the same book there is the story of how Yajnavalkya after defeating and putting to shame all the disputants in a vast assembly of scholars was challenged by Gargi, daughter of Vachaknu. with the following words: "I arise against thee, Yajnavalkya! As a warrior's son from Benares or Videha strings his bow and arises with two enemy-piercing arrows in his hand, so I arise against thee with these two questions. Answer them to me!"

Thirdly, the ethical rules for women were the same as those for men, and the same leniency was shown to women as to men in case of moral lapse. The ideal married life was based upon "mutual fidelity till death," and inconstancy was not looked upon as meriting greater punishment in the case of women

than of men. Fourthly, though polyandry was generally condemned (Tait. S. VI. 6. 4; Ait. Br. III. 12),* and becoming rare among the higher classes, the custom of Niyoga was widely prevalent as against the privilege of polygamy enjoyed by the male sex. This custom also to a certain extent neutralised the defect of the law regarding a woman's incapacity to inherit property. Fifthly, as in the previous period, infant marriage had not yet come into fashion, and girls were married when they became fit to bear children and undertake the responsibilities of married life.†

* The Atharvaveda V. 17. 8 points to a polyandrous condition in society: "When a woman has had ten husbands, not Brahmans, if a Brahman marries her, it is he alone who is her husband."

यत पतयो दशस्त्रियाः पूर्वे अब्राह्मणाः ।
ब्रह्मा चेद्धस्तमग्रहीत स एव पतिरेकधा ॥

"In this marriage (of Draupadi) to five husbands, the epic has indubitably faithfully preserved an old feature of the legend. This feature was so closely interwoven with the whole legend and the ancient epic that, even at a later time, when the Mahabharata acquired a more and more Brahmanical character and became a religious text-book, the elimination of this feature could not be dreamed of. All that was done was to try to justify the marriage to five husbands by means of several clumsily inserted stories.. . There is not even an attempt made to bring these three justification-stories into accord with one another or with the principal narrative. On the other hand, it is repeatedly distinctly emphasised that it was an ancient family custom of the Pandavas." (Winternitz, History of Indian Literature).

† Heroines of the Epics like Devayani, Kunti, Draupadi, Subhadra, Uttara were grown-up maidens when they were married. The Mahabharata states that one

Sixthly, notwithstanding the extensive practice of polygamy among the higher classes, the ideal of monogamy was not lost sight of. Thus at sacrifices and ceremonial occasions the first wife was regarded alone as a wife (Patni) in the fullest sense, the other wives more or less as concubines, and hence the word Patni was usually mentioned in the singular in the sacrifice.

Remarriage of women

Seventhly, the marriage of widows was permissible and was evidently in practice. The Atharvaveda (IX. 5. 27-28) declares that in case of the remarriage of a woman she would rejoin that housband in the next world who had offered the Panchaudanam oblation in this world.* The Aitareya Brahmana (III. 12) states that "one woman cannot have more than one husband at the same time," which passage, according to even orthodox commentators like Mitramisra in the Viramitrodaya (Adhibedana Prakaranam) and Nilakantha in his commentary on the Mahabharata I. 195. 29, indirectly recognises the marriage of a woman

should marry a grown-up maiden "वयस्कां तु महाप्राज्ञ कन्यामावोढु-मर्हसि", preferably a girl of sixteen "त्रिंशद्वर्षः षोडशाब्दां भार्यां विन्देत।"

* या पूर्वं पतिं वित्त्वाथान्यं विन्दते परं। पञ्चौदनं च तावजं ददातो न वियोषतः॥ समानलोको भवति पुनर्भुवापरः पतिः। योऽजं पञ्चौदनं दक्षिणाज्योतिषं ददाति॥

after the death of her husband.* The Taittiriya Samhita (VI. 6. 4) also declares it undesirable for a woman to have two husbands at the same time.

Specific instances of widow-remarriage are absent in the Vedic literature and meagre even in the Pauranic literature, because either the custom was so widely prevalent, especially in the cases of widows with their devaras or brothers-in-law, that no special notice was thought necessary, or because the successive expurgations and revisions in the hands of later orthodox Brahmans have led to the disappearance of undesirable dictums and references regarding this custom from the religious and epic literature.† In the society as represented in the Epics there was little objection to one's appropriating or accepting as wife an *anyapurva*, or one who had been deflowered

* Ait. Br. III. 12—तस्मात् एकस्य बह्वी जाया भवन्ति नैकस्यै बहवः सहपतयः।

Mitramisra—सह शब्द सामर्थ्यात् क्रमेण पत्यन्तरं भवति इति गम्यते।

Nilakantha—सह इति युगपत् बहुपतित्वनिषेधो विहित: नतु समयभेदेन।

† For instance, the well-known verse of Parasara Smriti, "नष्टे मृते प्रव्रजिते क्लीवे च पतिते पतौ। पञ्चस्वापत्सु नारीणां पतिरन्यो विधीयते॥" sanctioning remarriage of women under certain circumstances, formerly occurred in Manu, as was known to the author of the Viramitrodaya (Adhibedana Prakaranam), but has dropped out from the modern editions. Durgacharya sought to delete the inconvenient meaning of Devara as second husband from the text of Nirukta (III. 15) in connection with Rig. X. 40. 2, but fortunately the passage has survived.

by another person, the feeling which forms the main ground of objection to the marrying of a widow at the present day and to which is due the provision by some law-makers for the marriage of virgin widows. Nahusha wanted to marry the queen of Indra; Krishna appropriated the pick of the harem of the slain Naraka; Jayadratha wanted to make Draupadi "his wife"; Trisanku took the wife of a Vidarbha prince killed by him and had by her a son; and so on. That there was little prejudice against widow-remarriage is evidenced also by the stories of Damayanti's second *svayambara* after the disappearance of her husband Nala and king Rituparna's eagerness to marry her, the wife of a former husband,* and of king Ugrayudha's asking for the hand of Satyavati shortly after the death of her husband Santanu (Harivamsa XX). The wonder is that so much evidence of this custom has been allowed to survive in the Epic literature. Those who point to Manu IX. 65, "In the sacred texts which refer to marriage the Niyoga of widows is nowhere mentioned, nor is the remarriage of widows prescribed in the rules concerning marriage," as an authoritative pronouncement on the subject of remarriage of widows may

* This Nala Naisadha is probably the same person as Nada Naisidhi, mentioned in the Satapatha Brahmana, and so belonged to the Brahmana period. Compare this legend with the Buddhist tradition of the offers of marriage made by many princes to the wife of Gautama Buddha on the latter's forsaking the worldly life.

be reminded of the extensive and legalised practice of Niyoga in the Vedic period. The two, Niyoga and remarriage of widows, being bracketted together by Manu shows that one was as much in existence as the other though Brahmanical opinion was becoming more and more opposed to them.

Glorification of Brahmacharya and Sannyasa

That the moral tone of the community, especially of the Brahman class, was steadily improving is indicated by the development of the four-fold life of the Brahman.* The rigid discipline of both mind and body, the ideal of plain living and high thinking, the austere practices and constant meditation upon the Creator and His Creation, the Soul and the Life after Death, so forcibly and frequently enjoined upon in the Upanishads, cannot but have a very ennobling influence upon the moral atmosphere of the time. This redeems to a large extent the otherwise sordid picture of the gross partialities, preferences and prejudices which characterise the claims of the sacerdotal class. Indeed, for one who strictly followed the four Asramas of life, Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprastha and Yati, certain privileges, amenities and protective measures were specially needed. It is only when the rights and privileges are claimed

* The Asrama theory is found fully developed in later Upanishads (Maitr. IV. 3).

while the duties are avoided that the cry is raised against Brahmanical pretensions and tyranny. A student under the strictest vows of chastity, simplicity, obedience and service to Guru is certainly an object to be encouraged and glorified, and no one grudges when one whole hymn (XI. 5) of the Atharvaveda is devoted to the glorification of a Brahmachari. The Taittiriya Upanishad (I. 11) most solemnly exhorts the student "to speak the truth, practise virtue;...neglect not the sacrifices due to gods and manes; let thy mother be to thee as a divinity, also thy father, thy spiritual teacher, and thy guest; whatever actions are blameless, not others, shouldst thou perform; good deeds, not others, shouldst thou commend; whatsoever thou givest, give with faith, with graciousness, with modesty, with respect, with sympathy." Again, what a lofty ideal impelled a happy householder like Yajnavalkya living with his two virtuous and learned wives towards a life of Sannyasa for the knowledge about the Creator and the Human Soul. "When Brahmans know about this Soul, then elevating themselves from the desire of obtaining a son, from the desire of gaining the worlds (above), they lead the life of wandering mendicants; for the desire of a son is also the desire for wealth (to perform rites); the desire for wealth is also the desire for the worlds; for even both are desires. Therefore knowing wisdom let

the Brahman arm himself with strength." (Brih. Ar. Up. III. 5). An immense improvement is this from the world of spells and sacrifices of the Atharvaveda and the Brahmanas for the fulfilment of worldly desires. No wonder, therefore, that King Asvapati of Kekaya could boastingly point out that in his kingdom there were no thief, no drunkard, none neglecting the sacrifice and the sacred lore, no adulterer, no courtesan (Ch. Up. V. 11. 5).*

* According to scholars like Keith and McKenzie the Upanishads do not reveal a background of morality of any sort. But their interpretations seem to be narrow-minded. One example may be given. The saying that "sin does not cling to a man possessing true knowledge any more than water clings to a lotus leaf," does not give permission to a wise man to commit sin with impunity, but means that a truly wise man cannot commit a sin because he is above desires and temptations which prompt one to commit sin. It would be out of place to enter into a long discussion on the subject here. Scholars like Deussen, Hopkins, Radhakrishnan hold more rational and liberal views. There cannot be any question about the lofty tone of morality, more implied than expressed, in the Upanishad literature, though other evidences prove that the people of the time, striving as they were to attain to the high standard of ethics preached, were much below it in actual practice. Due credit must be given to the reforming sages, whoever they were. For good or evil, the virtues inculcated in the Upanishads were less of charity and philanthropy than of self-denial and negation which tend to quietism. "We should not ignore the fact that the metaphysical doctrine of the Atman, for whose sake we love our fellow-creatures, involves a deep ethical idea; as it is in reality the universal soul which we love in each individual, love for all creatures wells up from the recognition of the Atman. However, in the Upanishads, too, there is not much room left for actual moral teaching." (Winternitz, Hist. of Indian Literature I).

Ceremonial purity and touch-me-notism

During the Brahmana period we come across for the first time mentions of ceremonial purity and impurity attaching to certain persons or castes on sacrificial grounds. This arose out of the distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated, the non-Aryans being uninitiated and unendowed with the sacrificial girdle, the peculiar badge of the sacrifice-offering Aryans. So the Sudra was not to touch the milk at the specially sacred fire-sacrifice (Tait. Br. III. 2. 3). He was not to be treated as a member of the sacrificing community on sacrificial grounds and with him there should be no free intercourse on the sacred spot by men engaged in sacred ceremonies (S. P. Br. III. 1. 1). In course of time when some of the artisan classes lost their original status and became degraded, the treatment meted out to the Sudra was given to them. Thus the touch of a carpenter was regarded as impure during the celebration of sacrificial rites, which had to be removed by the sprinkling of sacrificial water (S. P. Br. I. 1. 3. 12). So far as the Sudras and artisans were concerned, the idea of defilement by touch was confined within the enclosure of the sacrificial ground and did not extend to ordinary circumstances of life. We shall see that even in the next period Sudras were often engaged as cooks in Brahman families, and ordinary Brahman house-

holders took cooked food from Sudras without aversion. But the same privilege was not given to the savage, unclean Chandalas, Paulkasas, etc., whose touch made food impure and unfit for consumption by an Aryan. Eventually the two ideas, the idea of ceremonial purity on sacrificial grounds, and the idea of defilement by the touch of a very unclean, repulsive being, invaded the position of the Sudras and those reduced to their rank from two sides until their touch came to be regarded as impure not only at sacrificial rites but on all occasions of life, especially in the matter of food and drink. But this was not in the Brahmana period. That the idea of defilement of food was yet in a nebulous state is attested by the story of Ushasti in the Chhandogya Upanishad (I. 10). Ushasti, a Brahman priest from the sacred land of the Kurus, in great distress took the remnant of food from an elephant-keeper's table with the argument, 'I cannot live without eating that,' and yet did not think himself impure enough for going to a neighbouring king the same day for employment as a priest in his sacrifices.

CHAPTER IV

Caste in the Sutras

(*c.* B. C. 800-300)

Aryan and Twice-born not synonymous

During the Sutra period the Aryans had spread themselves over almost the whole of India and the foreign character of the conquerors had been practically lost. A blending had taken place of Aryan and Dravidian cultures, and the racial distinctions had been merged in caste distinctions. Thus the word Ârya usually came to denote noble of heart as well as of birth, while the Sudra represented not a different race but a special caste only with fewer rights and privileges. No contrast is drawn between two races with different characteristics and cultures, as between the Arya and the Dasa in the Rigveda, or between the Arya and the Sudra in the later Vedas. Only very rarely, as in the Dharma Sutra of Apastamba (I. 9. 27. 11), do we come across "the black race" as being opposed to the Brahmans. The principal distinction in the Sutra literature is that between the twice-born and the once-born, which, though practically retaining the old distinctions between the conquerors and the natives, was more sacramental and social than racial. Besides, if we

remember that many of the Aryans, particularly of the Vaisya community, had lost the status of the twice-born by disregarding the caste obligations and taking to degrading professions, the racial aspect of the thing goes entirely out of view.

Again, it is not unlikely that many non-Aryans had by accepting the Aryan creed silently entered into the fold of the twice-born. Such was the disregard of the law-givers for racial distinctions that the Yavanas were said to be born of Kshatriya fathers and Sudra mothers (Gautama IV. 21), and that if the Yavanas had cared to show more respect to the Brahmans and their Shastras they might have been accepted as full-fledged Kshatriyas. The indiscriminate marital relations between Kshatriya families and Gandharvas, Nagas and Asuras, as mentioned in the Epics, must have given opportunities to many half-breeds and even full-bred non-Aryans to enter the rank of the Kshatriyas. The stories, however fanciful, of the origin of some classes of Brahmans, apart from the anthropometric evidences, lend colour to the supposition that non-Aryans did not fail to gain admission even into the Brahman fold. From the Bhavishya Purana we learn that the Maga (is it not Persian Magi?) or Sakadvipi Brahmans were brought by Samba, a son of Krishna, from Sakadvipa (Central Asia) and engaged as priests to a sun temple. The Sahyadri

Khanda of the Skanda Purana describes how Parasurama not finding any Brahmans for the performance of a Sraddha created for the purpose sixty men from the Chita or funeral pyre and consecrated them as Brahmans. They became the forefathers of the famous Chitpavan Brahmans of Konkan. Similarly, tradition ascribes to Rama the consecration of a number of hill-men as Brahmans, whose descendants are known as Anarvala and Sajodra Brahmans of Gujarat. Such admissions generally took place in the outlying parts of the country where the non-Aryan element was strong and where the number of Brahmans migrating from the Madhyadesha was very insufficient. Then we know from the traditions of more recent times how mixed indigenous Brahmans can merge themselves into an immigrating group, as happened in Bengal where most of the modern Brahmans trace their descent from the five immigrants from Kanauj about twelve hundred years ago while few call themselves the descendants of the seven hundred families of Brahmans who are said to have been natives of Bengal at the time. The ethnologists, moreover, would not set any value on the tradition of the pure Kanaujic descent of the Bengalee Brahmans when they find that the Brahmans of Bengal, especially of the eastern districts, show about 40 per cent. brachycephals while those of the United Provinces less than 5. That is probably the

cause of the dictum, as quoted by Hemadri in his Chaturvargachintamani from the Saura Purana: "The Brahmans of Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Saurastra, Gurjara, Abhira, Konkana, Dravida, Dakshinapatha, Avanti and Magadha should be avoided." Such Brahmans of non-Aryan or mixed descent were probably referred to in the Aitareya Brahmana VII. 27 and Chhandogya Upanishad VI. 1. 1 as 'Brahmabandhus.' They are pointed as Magadha-desiya (of the country of Magadha) in the Srauta Sutras of Katyayana XXII. 4. 22 and Latyayana VIII. 6 28. It is enjoined there that after the Vratyastoma, a sacrifice for the admission of a Vratya into the Aryan community his belongings had to be given away to a Brahmabandhu of Magadha. The difference between a Brahman from Madhydesha and a Brahman of the Eastern lands as emphasised in the Jatakas may be noted in this connexion. In the Mahabharata, Santi 76, the Brahmabandhus are bracketted with the Brahmans who are devoid of the ceremonies of initiation, etc., as being regarded like Sudras.

It was no doubt impossible for a known Kshatriya or Vaisya to become a Brahman by open methods in the later Vedic period, but not so for a nondescript or a tribe of nondescripts by the back door in the more remote parts of the country if some powerful patron could be found. "The very superstitions

of the non-Aryan tribes may have exerted an influence in their own way, if it be true, as good judges maintain (Lyall, Asiatic Studies, pp. 175-6 and pp. 172 et seq, Nesfield, pp. 63, 79), that groups of priest-sorcerers have been incorporated as Brahmans... Certain people, thanks to powerful protection or to trickery and corruption, find means to introduce themselves singly into various castes, this happens most frequently in the frontier territories, where observance is less strict. Men of every caste have been known to be made Brahmans by the caprice of a chief (Elliot, I, 148; Nesfield, p. 79)" (Senart). Cases of attempts to enter into a higher caste on the part of a lower-caste man by false statements were evidently known to Manu who prescribes penalties for such an offence: "He, who through arrogance makes false statements regarding his caste, shall be compelled to pay a fine of two hundred panas." (VIII. 273). "Let the king corporally punish if a Sudra assumes the distinctive marks of twice-born men." (IX. 224). The assumption of Gotra and Pravara names by those who had none to boast of is not an insuperable obstacle. This was made easier for the Kshatriyas by the dictum *purohita-pravarah rajnah*, i.e. men of the kingly class should have the Pravaras of their priests.

Thus the degradation of genuine twice-born men to Sudra and outcast ranks and the admission of non-Aryans and half-Aryans into

the twice-born community, together with the development of a uniform culture throughout the country, made it increasingly difficult to keep the words Arya and twice-born synonymous, as they had been in the beginning. Yet the prejudices of centuries, especially when racial, take a long time to die. So on some rare occasions the old meaning of the word Arya, as distinguished from non-Aryan or Sudra, comes out, as in Gautama VI. 11, "An Arya, though he be younger, must be honoured by a Sudra"; in Apastamba I. 9. 27. 10-11, "He who cohabits with a non-Arya woman shall sit on grass allowing his back to be scorched by the sun"; and Gautama X. 67, "If Aryas and non-Aryas interchange their occupations and conduct there is equality between them."*

Greater divergences between different orders

Since the beginning of the Brahmana period special rules had been prescribed for the different castes so as to make the differences between them as wide and permanent as possible. A few of these distinguishing rules might have some justification, but most of them were puerile and meaningless, only betraying the anxiety of the Brahman legislators to make the barriers between the

* Cf. Manu II. 103, "But he who does not worship standing in the morning, nor sitting in the evening, shall be excluded, just like a Sudra, from all the duties and rights of an Arya."

different castes, particularly between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans, as insuperable as possible by hedging round with any amount of thorns and rubbish. "Let him initiate a Brahman in spring, a Kshatriya in summer, a Vaisya in autumn; a Brahman in his eighth year, a Kshatriya in the eleventh year, and a Vaisya in the twelfth." (Apastamba I. 1. 1). "Let him initiate a Brahman with an antelope skin, a Kshatriya with the skin of a spotted deer, a Vaisya with a cow-hide. The girdle of a Brahman shall be made of Munja grass, that of a Kshatriya a bowstring, and of a Vaisya a woollen thread. The staff of a Brahman shall be made of Palasa or Bilva wood, that of a Kshatriya of Nyagrodha wood, and of a Vaisya Udumbara wood. That of the Brahman shall reach the tip of the nose, that of the Kshatriya the forehead, and of the Vaisya the hair." "Let the teacher recite a Gayatri verse to a Brahman pupil, a Tristubh to a Kshatriya, a Jagati to a Vaisya." "The name of a Brahman should end in sarman, that of a Kshatriya in varman, and of a Vaisya in gupta" (Paraskara I. 17. 4). "A Brahman pupil should beg, addressing the woman from whom he begs alms with the word "Lady" put at the beginning of his request, a Rajanya with the word "Lady" inserted in the middle, and a Vaisya with the word put at the end." (Paraskara II. 5) "A Brahman shall salute stretching forward his right arm on a level with his ear, a

Kshatriya holding it on a level with the brea., a Vaisya holding it on a level with the waist, a Sudra holding it low." (Apastamba I. 2. 5. 16). "A Brahman on meeting a Brahman of equal or younger age shall ask about his well-being (kushala), a Kshatriya about his being free from hurt (anamaya), a Vaisya if he has lost anything (anashta), a Sudra if he is free from disease (arogya)." (Apastamba 1. 4. 14). "The Sapindas become impure (in the case of the Brahmans) by the death of a relative during ten days and nights, the impurity of a Kshatriya lasts for eleven days and nights, that of a Vaisya twelve, or, according to some, half a month, and of a Sudra, a whole month." (Gautama XIV. 1-5). "In the Darvihoma the Brahman's prepared dish is to be of clarified butter, the Kshatriya's, of milk, the Vaisya's of whey, and the Sudra's of water." "In marriages of Brahmans with women of different castes, a Kshatriya bride must hold an arrow in her hand, a Vaisya bride a whip, and a Sudra bride the skirt of a mantle." (Vishnu XXIV. 6-8). So on and so forth.

Prescribed occupations of four varnas

The occupations of the different castes were fixed, and in ordinary circumstances there could not be any interchange. The lawful occupations of a Brahman in all the law-books were (1) studying, (2) teaching, (3) sacrificing for himself, (4) officiating as priest for

others, (5) giving alms, (6) receiving alms. Those of a Kshatriya were (1) studying, but not teaching, (2) sacrificing for himself, but not officiating as priest for others, (3) giving, but not receiving, alms, (4) governing, (5) fighting. Those of a Vaisya were (1) studying, (2) sacrificing for himself, (3) giving alms, (4) cultivating, (5) cattle-breeding, (6) trading, (7) lending money at interest. The Sudra was to obtain his livelihood (1) by serving the higher castes, and, if necessary, (2) by practising mechanical arts. He must not study the Vedas, nor make sacrifices, and his gifts would not ordinarily be accepted by Brahmans. By the close of the Vedic period the distinction between the Vaisyas and the Sudras, so far as their occupations were concerned, had become very slight, because in the time of Kautilya (4th cent. B. C.) among the lawful occupations of a Sudra were agriculture and cattle-breeding not only in times of distress but in normal circumstances (Arthasastra, Bk. I. Ch. III). In the course of time agriculture and cattle-breeding came to be regarded as degrading even for a Vaisya. Thus Manu states, "Among the several occupations the most commendable are teaching the Veda for a Brahman, protecting the people for a Kshatriya, and trade for a Vaisya." (X. 80). The degradation of agriculture, like handicrafts, was due more to the growing dislike of the Indo-Aryans, like the Romans of later times, for manual labour of any kind and

to the overwhelming association of non-Aryan Sudras in that profession than to the idea of ahimsa, or non-injury to living creatures, as Manu declares in X. 84 : "That means of subsistence (agriculture) is blamed by the virtuous; for the wooden implement with iron point injures the earth and the creatures living in the earth." Among the casteless or so-called mixed-caste peoples the Paulkasas and Nishadas must live by hunting, while the Chandalas by executing criminals sentenced to death and clothing themselves in the rags picked from dead bodies at the cremation ground.

Now the question arises as to what a man should do in case he failed to find employment within the limits of his prescribed occupations, or if he had not the necessary qualifications for them. So some latitude had to be allowed in order to let him live and not die of starvation. But he must not choose any and every profession for his livelihood. There were, however, great differences of opinion among the Sutra-writers in regard to this point. According to Vishnu, "in times of distress, each caste may follow the occupation of that next (below) to it in rank." (II. 15). "What has been acquired by the mode of livelihood of their own caste, by members of any caste, is called 'white.' What has been acquired by the mode of livelihood of the caste next below in order to their own, is called 'mottled.' What

has been acquired by the mode of livelihood of a caste by two or more degrees lower than their own, is called 'black'" (LVIII. 6-8). Thus a Brahman in distress might with little discredit take to the fighting and ruling professions of the Kshatriyas, and more blemish would attach to the following of agriculture, trade and other professions of the Vaisyas. Bandhayana, too, allows the profession of a warrior to a Brahman who cannot support himself by his own professions (II. 2. 4. 16). Apastamba, however, enjoins that "a Brahman shall not take a weapon into his hand, though he be only desirous of examining it" (I. 10. 29. 6), far less for using it as a means of livelihood, and includes the son of a Brahman who follows the profession of a Kshatriya among the persons who "defile the company if they are invited to a funeral sacrifice." (II. 7. 17. 21). Kautilya, however, refers to regiments of Brahmans as well as of other castes, and, in opposition to the opinion of his teacher, gives preference to Kshatriya warriors (IX. 2). Brahman officers "for the protection of the people in villages and towns" are mentioned by Apastamba (II. 10. 26. 4), and Brahman judges by Vishnu (III. 73). According to Gautama, "agriculture and trade are also lawful for a Brahman provided he does not do the work himself; likewise lending money at interest" (X. 5-6), while Apastamba states that "trade is not lawful for a Brahman" (I. 7. 20.

10) Even if a Brahman were obliged by circumstances to take to trade as the means of his livelihood, he must not trade in a large number of articles, such as perfumes, condiments, prepared food, sesamum, milk, flesh, medicines, cattle, etc. (Gautama VII, Vasistha II). The list of forbidden articles for trade purposes for a Brahman, however, varies in different books. From the description of the ceremony of harnessing to the plough in the Paraskara Grihya Sutra II. 13 and of ploughing in the Vasistha Sutra II. 32-35 we understand that the work of ploughing had not yet become forbidden or even degrading to a Brahman as it became in the time of Manu, who says (X. 83), "A Brahman or a Kshatriya, living by a Vaisya's mode of subsistence, shall carefully avoid the pursuit of agriculture, which causes injury to many creatures and depends on others (i.e. on bullocks, buffaloes, etc.)." Baudhayana declares trade, tending cattle, and lending money at interest as degrading for a Brahman (I. 5. 10. 24), but not agriculture. "In times of distress a Kshatriya may follow the occupations of a Vaisya." (Gautama VII. 26). In those parts of the country where the development of caste rules could not keep pace with that of the Upper Gangetic valley, or where the conditions of life compelled some relaxation of rules among the Aryan conquerors, the intermingling of occupations

invited to a funeral repast, they did not, however, thereby lose their caste, like others included in the list, such as bald men, men with deformed nails or black teeth, temple priests, those who sacrifice for a multitude of persons or a whole village, and those who sacrifice for, or receive gifts from, Sudras (Gautama XV. 16-18; Vishnu LXXXII. 3-29). It was an evil day for India and the caste system when birth, instead of occupation, became the only determining basis of caste. Even the Brahman legislators felt uneasy in their minds at the iniquity of the system under which even the best type of humanity born in the lower orders was doomed to a life of shame and degradation while the most wicked wretch belonging to the higher orders would be empowered by the Shastras to lord it over the other. Hence their attempt at reconciliation and consolation by stating that "in successive births men of the lower castes are born in the next higher one, if they have fulfilled their duties, and men of the higher castes are born in the next lower one, if they neglect their duties." (Apastamba II. 5. 11. 10-11).

Pretensions and privileges of Brahman caste

With the progress of time and consolidation of the Brahman power and position, the pretensions of the Brahmans continued to rise higher and grow more fantastic. "A Brahman, though only ten years old, and a member

of the kingly caste, though a hundred years old, must be considered as father and son; and of these two, the Brahman is the father." (Vishnu XXXII. 17). "If a king meets a Brahman, the road belongs to the latter." (Apastamba II. 5. 11. 6; Gautama VI. 25). "The king is the master of all, with the exception of Brahmans; ..Kshatriyas, who are assisted by Brahmans, prosper and do not fall into distress." (Gautama XI). The Brahman could not ignore the king, the man in power, and so claimed only personal superiority. But to the people in general he was not only a superior but a transcendental being, a god or more than a god. "The gods are invisible deities, the Brahmans are visible deities. The Brahmans sustain the world. It is by the favour of the Brahmans that the gods reside in heaven; a speech uttered by Brahmans (whether a curse or a benediction) never fails to come true. What the Brahmans pronounce, the gods will ratify; when the visible gods are pleased the invisible gods are surely pleased as well." (Vishnu XIX. 20-23).* "A Brahman

* "Let him (the king) not, though fallen into the deepest distress, provoke Brahmans to anger; for they, when angered, can instantly destroy him together with his army and his vehicles. Who can escape destruction, when he provokes to anger those men, by whom the fire was made to consume all things, by whom the water of the ocean was made undrinkable, and by whom the moon was made to wane and to increase again,...who could create other worlds and other guardians of the world, and deprive the gods of their divine station? A Brahman, be he ignorant or learned, is a great divinity, just as the fire,

shall not rise from his seat to receive a Kshatriya or a Vaisya (however learned and superior the latter may be)." (Apastamba II. 2. 4. 18). Such was the contempt felt, or encouraged to be felt, by a Brahman towards non-Brahmans that he would not allow even the leavings of his table to be taken by non-Brahmans before making them impure and dirty. "He shall not ordinarily give the residue of his food to a person who is not a Brahman. When he gives it to such a one, he shall clean his teeth and give the food after having placed in it the dirt from his teeth." (Apastamba I. 11. 31. 24). "He who in anger raises his arm against a Brahman, will be banished from heaven for a hundred years, if he strikes, for a thousand years." (Gautama XXI. 17-20). It is needless to multiply such illustrations of Brahmanical pride and arrogance* unparalleled in the literature of any people of the world,

whether carried forth or not carried forth, is a great divinity." (Manu IX 313-317).

* "But we must not overestimate the value of such passages or the exaltation of the Purohita in the later books of the Satapatha and Aitareya Brahmanas as evidence of a real growth in the priestly power ; these books represent the views of the priests of what their own powers should be, to some extent were in the Madhyadesa... the Epic, more nearly contemporaneous with the later Vedic period, displays despite all priestly redaction, the temporal superiority of the nobility in clear light." (Vedic Index II. 256-57) "The Brahman is regarded throughout the Codes as of double nature, on the one hand we have a godlike perhaps divine nature before us, on the other a man liable as other men to ills and liable to punishment if inflicting them." (Hopkins, Mutual Relations of the Four Castes p. 19).

civilized or uncivilized,—such passages and sentiments peeping out from almost every page and corner of the Sutra laws, and giving a most characteristic twist to the whole Indian culture.

That these pretensions should not remain mere empty boasts was the jealous care of the Brahman legislators, who sought in every way to guard the special temporal prerogatives and powers of the Brahman caste with clear-cut and strongly-worded laws. Of course, it should be remembered that in those early days of Brahmanical predominance there must have been sometimes protests and oppositions on the part of the non-Brahmans, especially the kingly class. But, as has been mentioned, some of the factors, which operated in favour of the Church against the temporal rulers in Mediaeval Europe, were present in India to ensure victories of the priestly class over recalcitrant princes, each victory further tightening the Brahman grip upon the society, while there was no awakened popular consciousness to beat back the priestly power in the moment of its victory. The rise of Buddhism no doubt represented a mass movement against the growing Brahmanical tyranny, and for a time held Brahmanism at bay. But the popular character of the movement was lost when Buddhism gradually developed into a separate creed and a rival sect to Brahmanism, which only engendered a

spirit of combative counter-reformation among the supporters of the old order. Unlike the Council of Trent and the fanatical popes of the type of Paul IV, the clever Brahman priest-legislators showed a surprising spirit of adaptibility and accommodation, and by adopting good many points from Buddhism in matters of theology and philosophy cut the ground from under the feet of their opponents. At the same time they not only did not yield, but rather strengthened their position, in the matter of caste rules, with the result that with the weakening of Buddhism the pretensions and prerogatives of the Brahmans became more strongly established than before. They had given up shadows only, so far as their material interests were concerned, and came out with an increased hold upon the substance. More detailed discussions of these points cannot be entered into here, and must be reserved for the second volume of this book.

Among the rights and privileges of the Brahman caste defined by the Sutra-writers may be mentioned the following. The right of keeping burning the sacred Garhapatya fire in every household had belonged to, and in fact was obligatory upon, every member of the Aryan community in the early Vedic age. But in the later Vedic age this right gradually became the exclusive privilege of the priestly class (Katyayana Sr. Sutra I. 6. 16)—the first step in the degradation of the Kshatriyas and

Vaisyas towards the rank of the Sudras. Again, The portion in sacrifice which fell to the yajamana, or the institutor of the sacrifice, was to be eaten only by the Brahman and not by the Kshatriya or the Vaisya (Hiranyakesin Sr. Sutra VI. 4). The Brahman alone possessed the privilege of performing the Soma sacrifice.

The Brahman was also most fortunately placed, as compared with the other castes, in the matters of marriage and occupation. Thus a Brahman might take wives from all the four varnas or orders, while a Kshatriya could take from three, a Vaisya from two, and a Sudra from his own caste only. Similarly, in cases of necessity a Brahman could make his selection from among the lawful occupations of all the three castes, if not four, while the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were not allowed to take to the occupations of the priestly caste. The duties of teaching, officiating as priests for others, and receiving gifts were said to be the peculiar privileges of Brahmans. "It is declared in the Smritis that a Brahman alone should be chosen as teacher. In times of distress a Brahman may study under a Kshatriya or Vaisya. And during his pupilship he must walk behind such a teacher. Afterwards the Brahman shall take precedence before his Kshatriya or Vaisya teacher." (Apastamba II. 2. 4. 24-27). "The rule for times of distress is that a Brahman may study under a teacher who is not a Brahman. A student is bound to

walk behind and obey his non-Brahmanical teacher. But when the course of study has finished, the Brahman pupil is more venerable than his non-Brahman teacher." (Gaut. VII. 1-3 and Baudh. I. 2. 3. 41-42). When the study of the Vedas and education in general were open to all twice-born men, it was difficult to prevent some one of the Kshatriya or Vaisya rank from acquiring distinction in learning and attracting pupils. Hence inspite of the injunction of the Sutras to the contrary and of the condemnation of taking lessons on the part of Brahmans from non-Brahman teachers, there were to be found here and there teachers belonging to Kshatriya, and rarely to Vaisya, rank, though it must be admitted that they were a small minority of the teachers' community and worked under great handicaps. As regards the right of officiating as priest for others, it had long been lost by the non-Brahmans and there was no protest now on that account even from the Kshatriyas.

The right of receiving alms by the Brahmans implied the duty of giving alms on the part of the non-Brahmans, and hence greatest importance was attached to this duty in the Sutras. "At all religious ceremonies, one shall feed Brahmans who are pure and who have studied the Veda." (Apastamba II. 6. 15. 12). "At the end of all ceremonies he should give to the

Brahmans to eat according to his ability." (Khadira I. 1. 3; Gobhila I. 1. 6). "For neglecting to invite at a Sraddha a Brahman, one's neighbour, a man shall be fined twenty-five Karshapanas." (Vishnu V. 94). And as ceremonies, great and small, were numerous in each twice-born family, the number of days in a year when a Brahman without doing any work obtained free food and also money gifts was not inconsiderable. Even unworthy Brahmans were not excluded from this privilege of free dinners. "At an offering to the gods let him not enquire into the qualities or descent of a Brahman whom he means to invite. But at an offering to the manes he must enquire as closely as possible." (Vishnu LXXXII. 1-2; Gautama XV. 30). "A king who gives land and money to Brahmans according to their deserts gains endless worlds." "In his realm no Brahman should suffer hunger, sickness, cold or heat." (Apastamba II. 10. 26. 1; 25. 11). "Let the king constantly show reverence to the gods and the Brahmans...And he must not suffer any Brahman in his realm to perish with want. Let him bestow landed property upon Brahmans." (Vishnu III. 76-81). Gifts even to unworthy Brahmans are more meritorious than those given to the most worthy non-Brahmans. "What is given to a non-Brahman produces fruit equal in value in the world to come. What is given to one who calls himself a

Brahman (but does not perform his duties) produces fruit twice as great. What is given to one who has studied the main portions of the Veda produces thousand times greater fruit.") (Vishnu XCIII. 1-3).

That Brahmans even in those days were not loathe to acquire properties, and that properties in the hands of Brahmans resembled to some extent in their relations to the state the properties of the Church in Mediaeval Europe, can be gathered from among many the following rules. First of all, a Brahman was free from taxes (Apastamba II. 10. 26. 10). "Let the king not levy any tax upon Brahmans. For they pay taxes to him in the shape of their pious acts." (Vishnu III. 26-27; Vasistha I. 43-44).* Secondly, "of a treasure-trove the king must give one half to Brahmans. He may deposit the other half in his own treasury. A Brahman who has found a treasure may keep it entire. A Kshatriya finder must give one fourth of it to the king, another fourth to Brahmans, and keep half of it to himself. A Vaisya must give a fourth part of it to the king, one-half to Brahmans, and keep the remaining fourth part to himself." (Vishnu III. 56-60; Gautama X. 44; Vasistha III. 13-14). Thirdly,

* As in the quarrels between Henry II and Becket privileges were claimed not only for the clergymen proper but even for the menial servants of the Church, so Manu seeks to allow exemption from taxation not only Brahmans (VII. 133), but also those "who confer benefit on Srotriyas, i.e learned Brahmans" (VIII. 394).

while the properties of non-Brahmans in default of legal heirs became escheats to the state, the properties of Brahmans in such cases must be divided among Brahmans (Gautama XXVIII. 41; Vasistha XVII. 87; Baudh. I 5. 11. 15). Fourthly, though service in general was discouraged for Brahmans (Gautama XV. 18; Baudh. I. 5. 10. 28), they might serve the king not only as his domestic priest but as ministers and even as judges apparently without disgrace. "Let him appoint as Purohita (domestic priest) a man conversant with the Vedas... And let him appoint ministers, who are pure, free from covetousness, attentive, and able. Let him try causes himself, accompanied by well-instructed Brahmans, or let him entrust a Brahman with the judicial business." (Vishnu III. 70-73). Brahmans along with Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were often appointed as petty administrative officers in towns and villages (Ap. II. 10. 26. 4).

A good Brahman enjoyed some special privileges. Though birth had now become the preponderant factor in caste, merit was not entirely lost sight of. Thus Baudhayana (I. 5. 10. 26-27) remarks, "Through the neglect of sacrifices, of lawful marriages, of the study of the Vedas, and of learned Brahmans, even noble families are degraded. The offence of neglecting a Brahman cannot be committed against a fool who is unacquainted with the Veda. For in offering sacrifices one does not

pass by a brilliant fire and throw the oblations into ashes." According to Gautama, a good Brahman is he "who is deeply versed in the Vedas; who is acquainted with the ways of the world, the Vedas and their Angas (auxiliary sciences), who is skilled in disputations and in reciting legends and the Purana; who looks to these alone and lives according to these; who has been sanctified by the forty sacraments (7 Pakayajnas, 7 Haviryajnas, 7 Somayajnas, 5 sacrifices to gods, manes, men, goblins, and Brahman, 4 vows for the study of the Veda, and 10 life ceremonies); who is constantly engaged in the three occupations (prescribed for all twice-born men) or in the six (prescribed specially for a Brahman); and who is well versed in the duties of daily life settled by the agreement (of those who know the law)." (VIII. 4-11). "Such a Brahman must be allowed by the king immunity from the following six (kinds of opprobrious treatment): He must not be subjected to corporal punishment, he must not be imprisoned, he must not be fined, he must not be exiled, he must not be reviled, nor be excluded." (VIII. 12-13). Some of these immunities along with others were enjoyed by the Brahmans in general, good or bad. "Corporal punishment, i.e. beating and mutilation, must not be resorted to in the case of a Brahman. Preventing a repetition of the deed, publicly proclaiming his crime, banishment, and branding are the punishments to

which a Brahman may be subjected." (Gautama XII. 46-47: Vishnu V. 2-8, Baudh. I. 10. 18. 17-18). Kautilya, however, awards the penalty of death by drowning to a Brahman guilty of high treason, while in the case of others the punishment is burning alive from head to foot (Arthasastra IV. 11). The Brahmans were exempted from taking oath in the witness-box of a court (Gautama XIII. 13). A Brahman's wergild was much higher than those of other castes. "He who has killed a Kshatriya shall give a thousand cows for the expiation of his sin. He shall give a hundred cows for a Vaisya, and ten for a Sudra.... He who has slain a man belonging merely to the Brahman caste (though he has not studied the Veda or been initiated for a Soma sacrifice) becomes an Abhisastā." Now the penance for killing a Brahman is that the murderer "shall emaciate himself and thrice throw himself into a fire; or he may become in battle a target for armed men; or remaining chaste, he may, during twelve years, enter the village only for the purpose of begging, carrying the leg of a bedstead and a skull in his hand and proclaiming his deed,...or he may free himself from the guilt by saving the life of a Brahman; by being thrice wounded to recover a Brahman's property from robbers; or by performing and bathing at the end of a horse-sacrifice." (Apastamba I. 9. 24; Gautama XXII. 1-9).

Ordinarily the punishment for murdering a Brahman was execution, except in the case of a Brahman culprit, who was to be banished with a headless corpse branded on his forehead (Vishnu V. 3-4). "A Kshatriya shall be fined one hundred Karshapanas if he abuses a Brahman, and in case of assault, twice as much. A Vaisya who abuses a Brahman shall pay one and a half times as much as a Kshatriya. But a Brahman who abuses a Kshatriya shall pay fifty Karshapanas and one half of that amount if he abuses a Vaisya." (Gautama XII. 8-13).

Duties of Kshatriyas

In the earlier Vedic period the term Kshatriya or Rajanya was used in a restricted sense, and denoted only the ruling class and not warriors in general. When the principle of heredity became stronger than the principle of occupation, what became of the members of noble families who were crushed by vicissitudes of fortune occurring frequently among fighting communities? Moreover, with the exaltation of the power of the king the power of the noble families was correspondingly depressed. So many of the old noble or Rajanya families became reduced to a condition when they could by no means be called nobles or ruling men. At the same time they retained their caste name, Kshatriya, which, originally implying the work of protecting, now acquired a wider significance, viz., the

occupation of fighting. Though the law-books permit a Kshatriya in distress to adopt the professions of a Vaisya (Gaut. VII. 26), we may suppose that the military traditions of their families and the vast field for employment in military and administrative services made the following of Vaisya occupations by Kshatriyas very rare. When such practices are met with in the outlying provinces where the caste system was not fully developed they are specially noted as out of the ordinary (Artha. XI. 1). Thus to all intents and purposes a Kshatriya meant a warrior, a meaning which had become general in the Epics. Now the question is whether all warriors were Kshatriyas. The answer must be in the negative. Kautilya refers to warriors of all the four castes and enters into a discussion about the superiority of Kshatriya warriors, which is doubted by some authors including his own teacher (Artha. IX. 2). Apastamba mentions men, other than Kshatriyas, "who live by the use of arms," whose food should not be taken by a Brahman (I. 6. 18. 19). Still, it is to be presumed that if a group of non-Kshatriya families went on following the occupation of fighting exclusively, and, better, if some of them could rise to the position of rulers, the Brahmans would in the course of time give them the name of Kshatriya. So though individuals from other castes were found in the ranks of army who were not called Kshatriyas,

military clans or tribes were not denied the name of Kshatriya, at first half and then full, by the Brahman writers. Thus the Yavanas who appeared to the Indians as a military people are described by Gautama as born of Kshatriya fathers and Sudra mothers (IV. 21), while Manu calls them Vratya or degraded Kshatriyas. They are never called Sudras, a term which would have been more fitting in as much as they did not belong to the Brahmanical system.

The general regulations for the Kshatriyas and their relations with the Brahmans have already been given partially in the preceding paragraphs, while some points will be noticed under the heads of food and marriage. The chief interest of the caste centres about the king, whose duties are given in detail in the law-books, but they lie mostly beyond the sphere of this book. The care of the Brahmans must be one of his foremost duties "In his realm no Brahman should suffer hunger, sickness, cold or heat, be it through want or intentionally. A king who gives land and money to Brahmans according to their deserts gains endless worlds. They say that a king, who is slain in attempting to recover the property of Brahmans, performs a sacrifice where his body takes the place of the sacrificial post and at which an unlimited fee is given." (Ap. II. 10. 25-26). One point is worthy of note in connection with the duties of a Kshatriya, that is

the growth of a code of chivalry. "There is no higher duty for men of the military caste than to risk their lives in battle. A king having conquered the capital of his foe should invest there a prince of the royal family of that country with the royal dignity. Let him not extirpate the royal race." (Vishnu III. 44-48). "No sin is committed by injuring or slaying foes in battle But slaughter is forbidden of those who have laid down their arms, those who beg for mercy with flying hair or joined hands, those who crouch in fear with averted faces, the fugitives, the messengers." (Ap. II. 5. 10. 11; Gaut. X. 17-18, Baudh. I. 18. 10). By the time of Manu the rules had become more elaborate and comprehensive (VII. 90-93). and they reflect much credit on the noble and humane character of the Indian warriors at such an early age. The Epics, which contain graphic descriptions of wars and battles, show that these rules of conduct were strictly observed in practice, breaches being regarded particularly blameworthy.

Writer-caste

There were two professions of non-military character into which the superfluities of the Kshatriya caste found an outlet. The first is the profession of scribes, which did not assume much importance when the state was largely tribal or feudal in character in the early Vedic period or even in the Epic period, and

when writing was unknown or little used. But with the formation of big territorial states, as under the Nandas, and of bureaucratic machineries of government which reached a high standard of efficiency under Chandragupta Maurya, the civil service created expert clerks out of the smaller Kshatriya, and sometimes Vaisya, administrative officers, and made the profession an hereditory one. Being divested of their military duties these clerical Kshatriyas were looked down upon and came to be regarded as degraded Kshatriyas or a mixed caste. Megasthenes refers to such a caste of writers.

Sutas or Bards

The second is the profession of bards or Sutas, who lived at the courts of kings and composed or recited their songs at great feasts and sacrifices proclaiming the glories of heroes, human and divine. The Asvamedha or horse sacrifice required the presence and service of two singers, one Brahman and one Kshatriya (S. P. Br. XIII. 4. 3. 5), who glorified the generous and heroic deeds of the sacrificing prince. From this it may be conjectured that the profession of Sutas was originally adopted by both Brahmans and Kshatriyas, and eventually led to the formation of a Brahman-Kshatriya mixed caste. Some colour is lent to this supposition by the description of the Sutas in the law-books as being descended from

Kshatriya father and Brahman mother (Gaut. IV. 17), indicating the preponderance of Kshatriya element among the Sutas. They retained a little of the military character as they often acted as charioteers to kings and accompanied them to battle-fields to inspire them with the songs of heroes and heroic deeds. The songs of the Sutas were the nucleus round which the great Epics grew. Like the class of scribes, the Sutas, too, having abandoned the military profession, came to be regarded as a non-Kshatriya caste of lower rank. The *Magadhas were at first probably those Sutas* who came from the semi-Aryanised country of Magadha, a breeding place of mixed and degraded castes. The Suta was one of the eleven Ratnins at the court of the king, according to the Maitrayani Samhita II. 6. 5 and Taittiriya Brahmana I. 7. 3 1.

Improved status of Sudras

In the Rigvedic times the Sudras had been slaves, pure and simple, taken from the Dasa enemies, and there was no regulation to guide the relations between the masters and the slaves. In the time of the Brahmanas the Sudras meant not slaves only but all the conquered natives who were reduced to the position of serfs. They were engaged as domestic servants and menial labourers in general, while there were some who were allowed to live by special handicrafts and probably also

by agriculture. Their political status was very low, that of one "who could not be other than a servant whose business was the washing of the feet of his superiors" (Panch. Br. VI. 1. 11), and "the servant of another, to be expelled at will, and to be slain at pleasure" (Ait. Br. VII. 29. 4). Yet on account of the greater intercourses between Aryan males and native females, the extensive employment of Sudras as domestic slaves, and the increasing association between Vaisya and Sudra craftsmen, a spirit of toleration, to some extent contemptuous, had succeeded the old spirit of hostility and destruction. A line of distinction seems to have grown between the Sudra domestic slaves and the Sudras pursuing independent means of livelihood. The former had of necessity to be entrusted with functions even at religious ceremonies, though of a humble nature, and with the preparation of food, etc., except on specially sacred occasions. The latter were treated more or less as being outside the pale of the community and beyond the scope of consideration.

By the time of the Sutras the condition of the Sudra had improved in many respects. The law gave him protection from personal violence even by the highest caste and security of property. He had a wergild of ten cows as against one hundred of the Vaisya, and one thousand of the Kshatriya (Ap. I. 9. 24. 1-3; Baudh. I. 10. 19). In

case of an assault upon him by a higher-caste man the latter was punished with a fine (Artha. III. 19). Even in case of simple abuse by a Brahman the fine was six panas (Vishnu V 36), though Gautama denies it (XII. 13).* Even a Sudra slave could not be ill-treated by his master. Thus Apastamba declares, "At his pleasure he may stint himself, his wife or his children but by no means a slave who does his work" (II. 4. 9 11). "Employing a slave to carry the dead or to sweep filth, urine or the leavings of food; keeping a slave naked; or hurting or abusing him; or violating the modesty of a female slave shall cause the forfeiture of the value paid for him or her." (Artha. III. 13).

A Sudra was not an unreliable creature, but could be cited as a witness in a law court (Gaut. XIII. 3). He could marry a wife of his own caste, and the marriage, though performed without the use of sacred texts, was legally recognised (Gaut. X. 55). His womenfolk were protected by law from the lascivious attentions of the members of the ruling classes. "A man of the first three

* Cf. Manu VIII. 268: "A Brahman shall be fined fifty panas for abusing a Kshatriya; in the case of a Sudra twelve." "Little as is the fine it is still important, for the very fact of enjoining a fine upon insulting one whom the Brahman, as popularly represented, needs to treat with no respect or consideration has a significance. It follows from this that as far as the letter of the law goes the Sudra has precise rights in his relations with even the highest caste." (Hopkins)

castes, who commits adultery with a woman of the Sudra caste, shall be banished." (Ap. II 10. 27. 8). Inspite of the repeated exhortations of the law-givers for the Sudras to acquire merit by only serving the higher castes, especially the Brahman, and not to acquire property for their personal benefit, there are numerous references to the possession of wealth and even hoards of wealth by Sudras (e.g. Gaut. X. 63), who could even engage servants (Vasistha III. 3), who could bestow gifts upon others, and whose property descended to their sons (Gaut. X. 39). There is even mention of regions being under the rule of Sudra kings (Vishnu LXXI. 64). A Sudra could earn livelihood not only by serving but also by the practice of mechanical arts (Gaut. X. 60), and even by trade, cattle-breeding and agriculture (Vishnu II. 14; Artha. I. 3). This was a recognition of the fact that in many partially Aryanised countries non-Aryans or Sudras could be found in various walks of life which belonged to the Aryan people in the Madhyadesha, and that even in the Madhyadesha the line of demarcation between the occupations of the Vaisyas and those of the Sudras had begun to grow fainter.

A Sudra was not regarded as hopelessly impure, and some rules of ceremonial purification were prescribed for him also. Thus, like the twice-born men, a Sudra could purify himself by sipping water

(Gaut. X. 51 ryans and the resisting natives fixed period of : keen, especially in the the family (Gaut. X1 ?nd a favoured place in Sraddhas and offer funeral oblations in the prescribed manner and could also perform the Pakayajnas (a class of minor sacrifice) (Gaut X. 53 & 65). He could offer gifts to Brahmans who received them without much blemish (Gaut. II 35, Ap. I. 2. 7. 21) except on certain special occasions (Ap. II. 8 18. 2).* From all these we may suppose that many of the non-Aryans were gradually imitating the lives and habits of their masters (as called *nyayavartin* by Manu V. 140) and were eager to adopt the religious practices of the Brahmans, and that there were many Brahmans who were willing to assist them in the performance of minor sacrifices, though repeated admonitions are to be met with in the law-books for Brahmans not to act as priests to the Sudras.)

The Mahabharata (Santi. 60) describes the rights of the Sudras thus: "The Sudras have no right to utter Vedic hymns, but they can perform domestic sacrifices to ward off evils and also the minor sacrifices like Vaisvadeva, and offer gifts and sacrificial fees. It is known that in a previous age a Sudra, named Paija-vana, performed Aindragna sacrifice and gave

* Such rules are to be found even in the later Dharma-sastras and Puranas. The Vishnu Purana, for instance, states, "दानञ्च दद्यात् शूद्रोऽपि पाकयज्ञैर्यजेत च । पित्र्यादिकञ्च वै सर्वं,

castes; who commits adultery woes. Offering the Sudra caste, shall be ban be done by all 10. 27. 8). (Inspite of them if that be done by Sudras the gods and the higher-caste people can partake of their offerings. Hence it is said that all the four varnas have right to perform Sraddha." At the conclusion of the performance of Sraddha by a Sudra the word Svasti should be used (Anushasana, 13).) In the same Epic (Vana, 206-15) we find the legend of a Brahman rishi, Kausika, receiving instruction in religion from a Sudra keeper of meat-stall, and honouring him by saying, "In my opinion you are a Brahman even in this life; because a Brahman who is haughty and is devoted to degrading vices is no better than a Sudra, and a Sudra who restrains his passions and is ever devoted to truth and morality I look upon as a Brahman, in as much as character is the basis of Brahmanhood." In the Anushasana Parva (ch. 10) the story is related of a Sudra, who, contrary to the traditional custom, became an ascetic and performed sacrifices. He was not punished for this breach of caste-rule, but rather was rewarded by being born as a prince after death. The Brahman sage, however, who acted as a priest for him at his sacrifices, received a lower rank on rebirth and became a domestic priest.) How different is the treatment meted out to the Sudra ascetic by the hero of the Ramayana, which represents a stage when the hostility of spirit between the

conquering Aryans and the resisting natives was particularly keen, especially in the Deccan, and which found a favoured place in the Epic at a later time when the rights and disabilities of the Sudra caste were sought to be rigidly defined.

One contributory factor towards the admission, grudging as it was, of the Sudras to some of the religious practices of the Aryan community was the degradation of some members of the Aryan folk to the rank of the Sudras. In the process of their degradation they were being shorn of many of their old rights and privileges, but still they remained in possession of some when they were finally classed with the Sudras. This residue then became the common property of the Sudras in general. It was chiefly because of this and of the fact that there was good deal of distinction between the Aryanised Sudra servants and the un-Aryanised Sudra freemen in remote parts of the country that many contradictory statements and differences of opinion are to be found in the law-books.

Rathakaras becoming Sudras

The case of the Rathakaras may be cited in this connexion. We have seen that the Rathakaras (chariot-makers), who evidently belonged to the Vaisya community and were regarded as quite honourable men in society in the Rigveda had gradually split off from the

Vaisya caste and were put as a separate caste in the Brahmanas lower than the Vaisyas, but not entirely excluded from the rights and privileges of the Aryan community. In the early Sutra writings we find that they still possessed the right of performing Agnyadhana sacrifice (Katyayana Srauta Sutra I. 1. 9), and that, like the three higher castes, they were assigned a particular season of the year for the performance of their sacrifices (Baudh. Gr. Sutra II. 5. 12. 9), while special Mantras were prescribed for them as for the three higher castes (Hiranyakesin Srauta Sutra III. 3). Baudhayana Dharma Sutra describes them as a mixed caste, being descended from a Vaisya male and Sudra female (I. 9. 17. 6), and so somewhat higher in rank than the Sudras. But the later law-givers were relunctant to treat them differently from the Sudras. The process of their merging in the Sudra community can be traced from the following observations of Kautilya. "Members of this (Rathakara) caste shall marry among themselves. Both in customs and avocations they shall follow their ancestors. They may either become Sudras or embrace any other lower caste excepting the Chandala." (Artha. III. 7). In the Jatakas they occupy a position even lower than that of the Sudras. In later times when they had been finally merged in the rank of the Sudras some of their former privileges were given to the Sudras in general

Lesser distinction between Vaisyas and Sudras

The difference between the Vaisyas and the Sudras was getting narrower day by day. Gautama (V. 41-42) prescribes the same form of greeting, viz., arogya or good health, for the Vaisyas and the Sudras, while the Brahmans are to be asked about their well-being (kushala), and the Kshatriyas about their being free from personal hurt (anamaya). Apastamba, however, employs the word anasta, or freedom from loss, in the case of the Vaisya (I. 4. 14 28). The same kind of treatment was shown to a Vaisya and a Sudra guest by a Brahman, viz., "they should be fed with his servants for mercy's sake" (Gautama V. 45; cf. Manu III. 112). The Vaisya and the Sudra are to employ the same remedies, as distinguished from those of the Brahman and the Kshatriya, in warding off misfortunes (Vasistha XXVI. 16; cf. Manu XI. 34). The occupations of the two castes were practically interchangeable. The general rule was that "in times of distress each caste may follow the occupation of that next below it in rank" (Vishnu II. 15). So the Vaisyas, who were rigidly shut out from the occupations of the higher castes, freely descended to those of the Sudras, viz., menial service and handicrafts, while the latter in distress were permitted to follow the professions of the Vaisya caste. Later on Sudras could be found in the protessions of cattle-breeding and firming not only in exceptional circumstances but at all times

(Vishnu II. 14, Kautilya I. 3). The gradual effacement of the distinction between the Vaisyas, at least a large part of them, and the Sudras was caused also by the increasing contempt with which the Brahmans had begun to look upon the professions of the Vaisyas. Some of the law-givers would not allow the professions of trade and cattle-breeding to a Brahman even in times of distress (Ap. I. 7. 20 10; Baudh I. 5. 10. 24), while Gautama permits trade and agriculture provided he does not do the work himself (X. 5). Lending money at interest was one of the acknowledged occupations of the Vaisyas. But a Brahman usurer was regarded as a dishonourable person who must not be invited to a Sraddha dinner (Gaut. XV. 18), and a good Brahman was forbidden to eat food offered by a Vaisya usurer as well as an artisan and a professional physician, though not food offered by a good Sudra (Ap. I. 6. 18. 14-22).

Advantages of the Sudras

Provided the Sudras maintained respectful distance and did not encroach upon the rights and privileges of the higher castes they were little interfered with in their modes of life and habits. Thus the obligatory ceremonies, non-observance of which caused loss of caste to the higher orders, were not enjoined upon a Sudra. He had no obligation to perform any ceremony at birth, marriage or death, not

to say of the forbidden ceremony of initiation and studentship He had not to offer sacrifices or do any worship at all. If any Sudra wanted to imitate the practices of the twice-born, he might be permitted to perform some ceremonies and to offer funeral oblations and some small sacrifices but without reciting the sacred texts He was not bound to observe any restrictions in marriage, such as marriage within one's Gotra and Pravara,* polyandry, remarriage of widows, adult marriage, things which were becoming condemned among the higher castes. He could indulge in drink and any kind of food, pure and impure, and could engage in any derogatory profession, such as that of a butcher, without incurring any blemish (Mhb. Vana, ch. 206). Of course, some general rules of good conduct are pressed upon his notice, as when Gautama states, "For him also are prescribed truthfulness, meekness, and purity." (X. 51). The point is made very clear in Manu X. 126-127: "*A Sudra cannot commit an offence causing loss of caste* (*pataka*), and he is not worthy to receive the sacraments; he has no right to fulfil the sacred law of the Aryas, yet there is no prohibition against his fulfilling certain

* "तर्हि न समानगोत्रां न समानप्रवरां भार्य्यां विन्देतेत्यनेन शूद्रस्यापि सगोत्रा कथं न निषिध्यत इति चेत्। अत्रोपदिष्टातिदिष्टगोत्रस्यैव निषेधो नत्वतिदिष्टातिदिष्टशूद्रगोत्रादेः अन्यथातिदेशे क्षत्रियवैश्यमात्रोपादानं व्यर्थं स्यात्। एतच्चाग्रमूलं प्रागुक्तमनुमात्स्यवचने द्विजातिग्रहणं सगोत्रावर्ज्जने शूद्रव्यावृत्त्यर्थम्। (Raghunandana, Udbahatattvam).

portions of the law. Sudras who are desirous of gaining merit, and know their duty, commit no sin, but gain praise, if they imitate the practice of virtuous men without reciting sacred texts." Vasistha (XVIII. 14) states that penances are not meant for a Sudra (cf. Manu IV. 80). The stamp of inferiority debarring the Sudras from the higher occupations in the state, and denying them equality in law, was to some extent compensated by their greater freedom from the oppressive caste rules of the Brahmans, a state of things which the modern Sudras with their absolute subjection to Brahmanic rules of life may sigh for.

More recent law-givers, however, like Raghunandana, show almost as much strictness in dealing with the habits and practices of the Sudras as with those of the Brahmans. That is because most of the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas having been degraded to the rank of the Sudras for negligent practices or having become heretics, especially in the outlying provinces, and because the vast mass of the non-Aryan Sudras in those provinces having not been raised to the proper standard of Aryan life of the Madhyadesha, the Brahman legislators and priests could not leave out of account the ninety-nine per cent of the population. So in the course of time the degraded Aryan peoples and the more cultured of the non-Aryans, grouped under different occupational and tribal castes, were drawn within

the pale of Brahmanical polity and rendered, though as Sudras, subject to the general rules of the Shastras which had been originally intended only for the twice-born.) Thus the sacramental practices of these Aryan or Aryanised Sudras should offer livelihood to the modern Brahman priests. Others were declared as untouchables, but hopes were held out to them that if any group of them followed the practices of the higher castes for generations they would be given a higher rank and be called "good" Sudras. The Sutra literature, however, does not contain any indication of this nature, because at that time in the Gangetic valley the society was almost complete even without the Sudras, who could therefore be ignored. The dictum that in the Kali age there are only two varnas, Brahman and Sudra, was then unknown.

Disabilities of the Sudras

Whatever mingling and association there might have been between the Vaisyas and the Sudras in respect of their occupation and whatever approximation the two castes might have made towards each other under the pressure of the pretentious priests and the proud nobles, there was still the lofty barrier between the two, between the Aryan conquerors and the non-Aryan conquered. (The ordinary sacraments and sacrifices were as much open to, indeed obligatory upon, the Vaisya as to the Brahman. But to the

Sudra were forbidden "the initiation, the study of the Veda, the kindling of the sacred fire" (Ap. I. 1. 1. 5). The Vedas are not even to be studied in the presence of a Sudra (Ap. I. 3. 9. 9; cf. Manu IV. 99). Fire for sacred purposes must not be fetched from a Sudra's house (Gobhila I. 1). "A Brahman must not give advice to a Sudra, nor what remains from his table, nor the remnants of sacrificial offerings, and must not explain the holy law to such a man, nor order him to perform a penance." (Vasistha XVIII. 14). A Brahman acting as priest for a Sudra becomes degraded and, according to Gautama, must be cast off from society (XX. 1). The racial and political question involved in the relation between the non-Aryan Sudras and the Aryan twice-born is reflected in a most lurid light in the penal code of the time. "A Sudra who intentionally reviles twice-born men by criminal abuse, or criminally assaults them with blows, shall be deprived of the limb with which he offends. If he has criminal intercourse with an Aryan woman, his organ shall be cut off, and all his property confiscated. If the woman had a protector, the Sudra criminal shall be executed. If he listens intentionally to a recitation of the Veda, his ears shall be filled with molten tin or lac. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out. If he commits them to memory his body shall be split in twain. If he assumes a position equal

to that of twice-born men in sitting, lying, in conversation, or on the road, he shall undergo corporal punishment." "In case a Sudra commits homicide or theft, or appropriates other's land, his property shall be confiscated and he himself shall suffer capital punishment.") (Apastamba II. 10. 27, Gautama XII; cf. Manu VIII).

Defilement by Touch

The rules regarding defilement by touch became more elaborate and rigid during this period and naturally the Sudras were the worst sufferers, the lowest or casteless castes being incapable of further degradation from their original untouchable status Thus more and more restrictions were imposed upon the liberty of higher-caste men to take food from Sudra hands not only on ceremonial occasions but in daily life. "What has been brought by an impure Sudra must not be eaten, nor what has been brought at night by a female slave. If during his meal a Sudra touches, then he shall leave off eating. One must not eat the food offered by an artisan, a physician, a usurer, a washerman, an outcast, a wine merchant, a spy, a hunter, a cobbler,) etc." (Vasistha XIV; Apastamba I. 5. 16-18). One must not even sip with water offered by a Sudra (Gaut. IX. 11; Vishnu LXII. 5). "If a Brahman dies with the food of a Sudra in his stomach, he will become a village pig in his next life or be born in the family of that Sudra.

For though a Brahman whose body is nourished by the essence of a Sudra's food may daily recite the Veda, though he may offer an Agnihotra, or mutter prayers, nevertheless he will not find the path that leads upwards." (Vasistha VI. 27-28).

Food cooked by Sudras not objectionable

Yet with all these restrictions the position of the Sudras as regards defilement was much better than that of their present-day descendants. According to some law-givers like Varshyayani food given unasked might be accepted from any body. Gautama also declares that "alms may be accepted from men of all castes, excepting Abhisastas and outcasts," (II. 35), and alms included "prepared food" except in the case of those who required coins for certain specified purposes (V. 21-22; Baudh. II. 3. 5. 19-20). Apastamba's statement (I. 1. 3. 27), too, that "alms shall not be considered leavings and be rejected by inference from their appearance, but on the strength of ocular or oral testimony only," proves that alms meant prepared food. Among the acts which made men impure (ashuchikara) was not eating the food cooked by a Sudra, but eating the leavings from the table of a Sudra, "*Sudrochchhishtam*" (Ap. I. 7. 21. 17). "(In times of distress) he may eat the food of a Sudra, after having touched it with gold or with fire. He shall

not be too eager after such a way of living. He shall leave it when he obtains a lawful livelihood." (Ap. I. 6. 18. 15; cf. Manu X. 104). "If a Brahman eats what has been left by a Sudra after eating, he must subsist on milk for seven days. If he eats what has been left by a Vaisya, for five days. If he eats what has been left by a Kshatriya, for three days. If he eats what has been left by another Brahman, for one day." (Vishnu LI. 50-53). "Pure men of the first three castes shall prepare the food of a householder which is used at the Vaisvadeva ceremony. The cook shall *not speak, nor cough, nor spit*, while his face is turned towards the food. He shall purify himself by touching water if he has touched his hair, limbs or his garments. *Or Sudras may prepare the food* under the superintendance of men of the first three castes.* For them is prescribed the same rule of sipping water.† Besides, the Sudra cooks daily shall cause to be cut the hair of their heads, their beards, the hair on their bodies, and their nails. And they shall bathe, keeping their clothes on. Or they may trim their hair and nails on the eighth day of each half-month, or on the

* "आर्य्याधिष्ठिता वा शूद्राः संस्कर्तारः स्युः"

† "Sudras living in the service of Aryas shall trim their hair and nails every month ; their mode of sipping water shall be the same as that of Aryas." (Baudh. I. 5. 10. 20).

days of the full and new moon. The householder himself shall place on the fire that food which has been prepared by Sudra cooks without supervision, and shall sprinkle it with water. Such food also they state to be fit for the gods. When the food is ready, the cook shall place himself before his master and announce it to him saying, 'It is ready.' The answer of the master shall be, 'That well-prepared food is the means to obtain splendour; may it never fail!" (Apastamba II. 2. 3. 1-11). So it is seen that there was little objection to taking food cooked by a Sudra domestic servant provided he kept himself sufficiently clean. But even an independent Sudra could offer not only cooked food as alms to Brahman beggars but prepared food to Brahman priests at certain sacrificial offerings. "Some declare that he (the Sudra) himself may offer the Pakayajnas (cooked food oblations)" (Gaut. X. 65), and it is known that on such occasions the sacrificer "having prepared food and given to the Brahmans to eat, should cause them to pronounce auspicious words." (Asvalayana Grihya Sutra II. 3. 13).* "If the means for

* Raghunandana (16th cent. A.D.) admits that the Sudras could offer food cooked by themselves to Brahmans at sacrifices, but states that it is forbidden in the Kaliyuga when they are to offer uncooked rice, which is regarded for them as equivalent to cooked food as prescribed in the Vedic literature. All inconvenient rules of the old Shastras are brushed away by the modern Brahmans on the strength of an extract from a little known Upapurana, called Aditya

sustaining life cannot be procured otherwise, they may be accepted from a Sudra. A herdsman, a husbandman, an acquaintance of the family, a barber, and a servant are persons whose food may be eaten. And a trader, who is not at the same time an artisan." (Gaut. XVII. 5-7; Vishnu LVII. 16).

That the virus of food defilement was slowly infecting the relations even between members of the twice-born community can be clearly perceived from the following rule. "A student of the Brahman caste who has returned home (from his teacher's place) shall not eat in the house of people belonging to the three castes beginning with the Kshatriya (i.e. Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra)." (Apastamba I. 6. 18. 9). This is only the beginning of the process which culminated in Mahomedan times in the division of the people into two castes only, Brahman and Sudra, with no intervening links. The hyper-logical Brahman mind carried these fantastic scruples regarding food to such an extreme that one's food was not regarded as sufficiently pure if it was prepared or touched by any other than a member of his own kin. Finally, the most orthodox Brahman

Purana, which forbids for the Kaliyuga many practices which were formerly current.

"यत्तु विष्णुपुराणे—दानञ्च दद्यात् शूद्रोऽपि पाकयज्ञैर्यजेत च। पित्रादिकञ्च वै सर्व्वं शूद्रः कुर्व्वीत तेन च॥ अत्र यजेतेत्यनेन शूद्रकर्त्तृकपाकाभिधानं तत् कालीनपरं। ब्राह्मणादिषु शूद्रस्य पक्वतादिक्रियापि च। इति प्रागुक्तादित्य पुराणेन निषेधात्। अतएव आमं शूद्रस्य पक्वान्नं पक्वमुच्छिष्टमुच्यते। इति तु स्वयं करण एव वैश्वदेवहोमादौ बोद्धव्यम्।" (Suddhitattvam).

would have nothing but that prepared by himself. Besides, the analogy between women and Sudras tended to extend the principle of touch-me-notism, so far as circumstances permitted, towards even Brahman women. This tendency is clearly perceptible in Apastamba II. 4. 9. 7, if we accept the interpretation of the commentator Haradatta that the rule was intended to prohibit a man sharing food from the same vessel with his own wife and uninitiated children.

The Chandala is regarded as the most unclean and wretched being, with whom there can be no intercourse whatsoever. "The Chandala is the foulest of men." (Gaut. IV. 28). "It is sinful to touch a Chandala, to speak to him, or to look at him. The penance for touching him is to bathe, submerging the whole body; for speaking to him, to speak to a Brahman; for looking at him, to look at the lights of heaven." (Ap. II. 1. 2. 8-9). "Even on touching persons who have touched a Chandala one shall purify himself by bathing dressed in his clothes." (Gaut. XIV. 30). "If a funeral offering is looked at by dogs, Chandalas or outcasts, it is blemished." (Gaut. XV. 24). "The Veda is not to be studied in a village while a Chandala is in it." (Gaut. XVI. 19). "A Krichchhra penance for three months must be performed for eating food given by a Chandala or an outcast. Afterwards the initiation must be perfomed once

more; but the tonsure and the rest may be omitted." (Vasistha XX. 17).

Impurity by death

From the earliest times the Indo-Aryans displayed great aversion and fear towards the dead body of a man, however beloved and respected that man might have been in life. This was due chiefly to the superstition associating death with demons and ghosts bent upon committing mischief and destruction. The funeral hymn of the Rigveda runs thus: "May these, who are living, be kept distinct from the dead; may the offering we present this day to the gods be propitious; we go with our faces to the east, to dance and to laugh, for we are in the enjoyment of prolonged life. I place this barrier (of stones) for the living, on this account, that no other may go beyond it. May they live a hundred numerous autumns, keeping death at a distance by this hill" A dead body is such an object of aversion that it makes the whole place, the whole village, impure and it must, therefore, be cremated with as little delay as possible. A Brahmachari should stop reading the Veda in a village in which a corpse lies. On certain ceremonial occasions a dead body must not be looked at. When the question of defilement of food arose, naturally death in a family came to be regarded as a great source of defilement. "He shall not eat in the house of a relation within six degrees

of a person who has died, before the days of impurity have elapsed (ten days in the case of Brahmans, eleven of Kshatriyas, and twelve or fifteen of Vaisyas), nor in a house where a corpse lies." (Apastamba I. 5. 16. 18-20). "The rules regarding impurity caused by the death of a relative apply to the birth of a child also. But in that case the impurity falls on the parents or on the mother alone." (Gautama XIV. 14-16).

CHAPTER V

CASTE IN THE SUTRAS (continued)

Forbidden food articles

While in the early Vedic period there were little restrictions in the matter of food-stuffs, with the advance of hygienic knowledge and ideas of cleanliness, both ceremonial and otherwise, a good deal of discrimination arose as regards the foods to be taken. "He shall not eat that food in which there is a hair, or any other unclean substance. Nor must that food be eaten which has been touched with an unclean substance; nor that in which an insect living on impure substances is found; nor that in which excrements or limbs of a mouse are found, nor that which has been touched by the foot; nor what has been touched with the hem of a garment, nor what has been touched by a dog or an Apapatra...He shall not eat food which has been bought or obtained ready-prepared in the market. Nor shall he eat flavoured food bought in the market excepting *raw meat*, honey and salt. Oil and clarified butter bought in the market he may use, after having sprinkled them with water. Prepared food which has stood for a night must neither be eaten nor drunk, nor should prepared food that has turned sour. All intoxicating drinks are forbidden...Likewise

the milk of cows during the first ten days after their giving birth to young ones. Likewise food mixed with herbs which serve for preparing intoxicating liquors. Likewise garlics, onions and leeks. Mushrooms ought not to be eaten, that has been declared in a Brahmana; nor the meat of one-hoofed animals, of camels, of the Gayal, of village pigs, of Sarabhas, and of cattle. *But the meat of milch cows and oxen may be eaten.** The Vajasaneyaka declares, 'bull's flesh is fit for offerings.' Among birds that scratch with their feet for food the tame cock must not be eaten, among birds that feed thrusting forward their beak, Plava. Carnivorous birds are forbidden. Five-toed animals ought not to be eaten with the exception of the iguana, the tortoise, the boar called Svavit, the porcupine, the rhinoceros, and the hare. Among fishes, the Cheta ought not to be eaten, nor the snake-headed fish, nor the alligator, nor those which live on flesh only, nor those which are misshaped like mermen." (Apastamba I. 5. 16-17; Vasistha XIV). Among the acts which make men impure (ashuchikara) is "eating the flesh of forbidden creatures, as of a dog, a man, village cocks and pigs,† carnivorous animals...Some declare that these acts also cause a man to lose his caste." (Ap. I. 7. 21.

† Tame cocks and pigs, unlike wild ones, are forbidden because of their filthy feeding.

14-18). "After having eaten forbidden food, he must fast until his entrails are empty. That is generally attained after seven days. Or he may during winter bathe in cold water both morning and evening. Or he may perform a Krichchhra penance, which lasts twelve days." (Ap. I. 9. 27). "In case one has eaten any kind of forbidden food, or that given by a person whose food must not be eaten, the means of removing the guilt is to sprinkle water while one recites the Taratsamandi Rikas." (Baudh. IV. 2. 5).

Intoxicating liquors for drinking

"They shall pour hot spirituous liquor into the mouth of a Brahman who has drunk spirituous liquor (until he dies); he will be purified after death. If he has drunk it unintentionally, he shall drink for three days hot milk, clarified butter, and water and air. That penance is called the Tapta-Krichchhra. Afterwards he shall be again initiated. And the same penance must be performed for eating a carnivorous beast, a camel, or an ass; and tame cocks or tame pigs." (Gaut. XXIII. 1-5). "Distilled from sugar, or from the blossoms of the Madhuka, or from flour; these three kinds of spirituous liquor have to be discerned; as one, so are all: none of them must be tasted by the twice-born. Again, distilled from the blossoms of the Madhuka tree, from molasses, from the fruits of the

Tanka tree, of the jujube tree, of the date tree, of the bread-fruit tree, from wine-grapes, from Madhuka blossoms, Maireya, and the sap of the cocoanut tree : these ten intoxicating drinks are unclean for a Brahman; but a Kshatriya and a Vaisya commit no wrong in touching them." (Vishnu XXII. 82-84). The anathemas with regard to drinking affected the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas but slightly as many kinds of drink were allowed to them, and they too did not fail to indulge in them. In the Ramayana we find that even the sage Bharadvaja offered wine to Bharata and his soldiers, and that Rama "embracing Sita with both his hands made her drink pure Maireya wine, even as Indra makes Sachi drink nectar." The Mahabharata mentions how Baladeva, Krishna and Arjuna indulged in drink in the company of their wives, sisters and daughters, and how queens like Sudeshna used to quench their thirst with wine. There was no restriction in the law-books for the Sudras in the matter of drinking. The elaborate regulations concerning the manufacture and sale of various kinds of liquor in Kautilya's Arthasastra and the description of "Aryas lying down in intoxication along with their beautiful mistresses in wine shops" (Bk. II. ch. 25) certainly portray a society in which the people had not gone absolutely "dry." Kautilya, however, seeks to restrain the drinking habit as far as possible. "Lest workmen

spoil the work in hand and Aryas violate their decency and virtuous character, liquor shall be sold to persons of known character in such small quantities as $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 kurumba or $\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 prastha. Those who are well-known and of pure character may take liquor out of shop. Those who are too extravagant or spend beyond their income shall be arrested. Fresh liquor shall not be sold below its fixed price."

Beef-eating in the Sutras

It is curious to note that the Brahmans, not to say of other castes, still indulged in beef-eating, which in more modern times has come to be regarded as a deadly sin. In fact, the sacrifice of cows and bulls was not only optional, as in Apastamba I. 5. 17. 30, but compulsory on certain occasions and ceremonies. At Sraddhas, or periodical oblations to the manes, the sacrifice of cows is recommended, as substances like rice, barley, sesamum, fruits, beans, etc. keep the manes satisfied for a month, the flesh of goats for six months, while beef satisfies them for a year (Apastamba II. 7. 16. 26; Vishnu LXXX. 1-9). "On the eleventh day (after the death of a person) a meal should be given to an uneven number of Brahmans at which meat is served. Some also kill a cow in honour of the deceased person." (Paraskara Grihya Sutra III. 10. 48-49). Distinguished guests like one's teacher, priest, father-in-law, friend, a Snataka and

king are to be honoured by a householder with the presentation of a cow to be slaughtered. Hence guests are called goghnas or slayers of cows in the ancient Indian literature (Panini III. 4. 73). This ceremony of Madhuparka, as it is called, appears to be similar to the custom of fatted calves being slain by the Jews in honour of distinguished visitors. On being presented with the cow and a butcher's knife the guest "murmurs 'Destroyed is my sin; my sin is destroyed,' 'Om, do it,' if he chooses to have her killed. Having murmured, 'The mother of the Rudras, the daughter of the Vasus,' 'Om, let her loose,' if he chooses to let her loose. Let the Madhuparka not be without flesh, without flesh." (Asvalayana Grihya Sutra I. 24. 31-33; Paraskara I. 3. 26-29). "Now he may cook a full-grown ox or a full-grown goat for a Brahman or Kshatriya guest; in this manner they offer hospitality to such a man." (Vasistha IV. 8). A cow should be killed to honour the bridegroom on the wedding day in the house of the bride's father and also in the house of the bridegroom when the newly-married couple have arrived after marriage (Sankhayana I. 12. 10). Again, a cow is to be sacrificed at the time of cremation of a dead body. "Taking out the omentum of the she-animal the son of the deceased person should cover therewith the head and the mouth (of the dead person laid on the pile) with the verse, 'Put on the

armour which will protect thee against Fire by that which comes from the cows.'" (Asvalayana IV. 3. 20). When a new house was constructed a black cow had to be sacrificed and offered to the deity of the dwelling-house (Khadira IV. 2. 17; Gobhila IV. 7. 27). At the Sulagava, or spit-ox sacrifice to Rudra, performed in autumn or in spring, the best ox of the herd was slaughtered. "On an express injunction, however, the sacrificer should partake of the sacrificial food for it will bring luck. This spit-ox sacrifice procures wealth, space, purity, sons, cattle, long life, splendour." (Asvalayana IV. 8; Paraskara III. 8).*

"On the middle Ashtaka a cow is sacrificed. He should place the cow to the east of the fire, facing the west, and should sacrifice Ajya with the verse, 'What, O beasts'...Going in a northern direction from the fire he should kill the cow, its head having been turned to the west, the feet to the north...His wife should wash the apertures of its body...The Avadanas should be taken from all its limbs...He should cook the Avadanas and a mess of sacrificial food stirring up with two different pot-ladles." (Khadira III. 4; Paraskara III. 3). "At the wedding, one cow; in the house, one

* That the modern ceremony of releasing a bull at funeral rites (Vrishotsarga) is connected with the old bull-sacrifice is perceived even by modern pundits. Thus Raghunandana says "वृषोत्सर्गस्य शूलगवतुल्यगोयज्ञातिदेशात्यागत्वमिति।" (Suddhitattvam).

cow. With the first cow he should prepare an Argha reception for the bridegroom as for a guest, with the other for a person whom he reveres. These are the occasions for killing a cow: the arrival of a guest, the Ashtaka sacrifice offered to the Fathers, and marriage." (Apastamba Grihya Sutra I. 3. 5-9). "When honouring a guest, at a sacrifice, or when worshipping the manes, or the gods, a man may slay cows, but not otherwise on any account. That twice-born man who, knowing the exact truth promulgated in the Veda, slays cows for the sacrifices, will convey himself and the cows slain to a blissful abode." (Vishnu LI. 64-65). "On the following day (Ekashtaka day) he sacrifices a cow to the Fathers...When it has been sprinkled and fire has been carried round it, they kill it to the west of the fire, its head being turned to the west, its feet to the south...He sacrifices the omentum entirely. The other parts he should offer to the Brahmans and should feed them with those parts of the cow." (Hiranyakesin Grihya Sutra II. 5. 15). It is needless to mention such extraordinary ceremonies as the Rajasuya, Vajapeya, Asvamedha and Gomedha, in which the slaughter of cattle was an indispensable factor.

An interesting point to note is that following the detailed instructions of immolation in the Sutras one comes to find that the modern practice of Jhatka-bali, or severing

the head of the victim with one stroke, the slightest failure in which is looked upon as an evil omen requiring expiatory ceremonies to avert the consequences thereof, had not yet come into fashion. Animals were often strangled so that there should be no sound from the victim and no effusion of blood, and sometimes killed with a wooden spike called sphya being driven into the region of the heart, and sometimes pierced through and slain with a knife. Generally an animal was laid on some kusa grass spread near the Samitra fire with its head turned to the east or the west, and all the feet to the north, and killed in that position—a position in which decapitation with one stroke of a big quadruped like cow or buffalo was practically impossible. We do not find in the Sutras any mention of expiatory ceremonies to avert the evil effects of a flaw in decapitation. While the animal was being killed the principal celebrants of the sacrifice including the priests had to turn their faces away because the sight was revolting, or more probably "to escape recognition by the soul of the indignant victim." In order not to incur the wrath of the victim, stress was laid in the verse addressed to it on the fact that it was not really being slain.

The bull's hide, which is nowadays regarded as a very impure thing not to be touched by an orthodox Brahman, was a

sacred object with the Vedic Indians and was indispensable as a seat at the wedding, Simantonnayana, student's bath, and other important ceremonies. "'A Bull's hide'—this has been declared. On that hide the husband makes her sit down and sacrifices, while she takes hold of him, four oblations." "A bath shall be taken by the student when he is going to return home from his teacher. 'A bull's hide'—this has been declared. On that hide he makes him sit down and have his hair and beard cut and the hair of the body and the nails... With the verse 'Rise up' he takes the shoes... Let him first approach a place where they will perform Argha for him with a cow or a goat." (Sankhayana I. 16 and III. 1). "In the fourth month of pregnancy the Simantonnayana is performed... Having spread to the west of it a bull's hide with the neck to the east, with the hair outside, he makes oblations while his wife is sitting on that hide and takes hold of him with the two verses." (Asvalayana I. 14. 1-3).

The modern orthodox Brahmans are mostly averse to the use of animal food, and the lower-caste people, too, often seek to imitate them in order to raise themselves in their estimation. But the Vedic sages were great meat-eaters. Meat was almost compulsory at the Annaprasana (or first feeding with solid food) ceremony of a child, and from then till death and cremation sacrificing of animals,

sometimes cows, was necessary on most of the ceremonial occasions of life. "An ascetic who, invited to dine at a sacrifice of the manes or of the gods, rejects meat, shall go to hell for as many years as the slaughtered beast has hairs." (Vasistha XI. 34). Only during the Brahmacharya period animal food was forbidden for a considerable length of time, as also during occasional periods of impurity caused by the death of a Sapinda. Passages like Apastamba I. 5. 17. 15 indicate that there were butchers' stalls in the market and that no blemish was attached to the use of dressed-up meat from the market. "He who eats meat, after having honoured the gods and the manes, commits no sin, whether he has bought it, or himself has killed the animal, or has received it as a present from others." (Manu V. 32). Kautilya lays down elaborate regulations for slaughter-houses and butchers' stalls in the market (Artha. II. 26) and mentions "sellers of cooked meat" (पाक्वमांसिकाः) as a class of men living in a city (II. 36). In the Mahabharata (Vana, 206) we find the presence of meat shops in the market crowded with customers even in a city like Mithila under the rule of the sage-king Janaka. At certain sacrifices there are elaborate instructions as to how the different parts of the sacrificed animal are to be distributed among the eager Brahmans engaged in the different func-

are pronounced against those who would venture to disobey these instructions. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (VI. 4. 18) states, "He who desires to have a son who will be unvanquished in the assembly of scholars and whose speech will be respected by all, who can teach all the Vedas and will live a long life, should eat rice cooked with meat and clarified butter, the meat being that of a bull or a ram." The Mahabharata abounds with passages indicating a general practice of meat-eating among even the Brahmans and Kshatriyas. The great sacrificing and pious king Rantideva used to have two thousand cows slaughtered daily for his kitchen and for distribution of meat-rice (evidently among Brahmans), "by which he achieved unparalleled reputation" (Mbh. III. 207). The tradition of sages like Vasistha, Viswamitra and Jamadagnya being voracious devourers of beef is retained in a well-known passage of the Uttararamacharita and in the Mahaviracharita. In Kautilya's Arthasastra cattle are classified, and among the various classes mentioned there is one "class of cattle (वृषभासस्नाः) that are intended only for the slaughter-house." (II. 29).

Growing vegetarianism

By the time of the Sutra laws a revulsion of feeling had been slowly taking place against the slaughter of animals, and particu-

acknowledged the existence of souls and senses in all animals, and when, according to the later theory of transmigration of souls,* there was no certainty that the soul of one's dearest relative would not enter the body of a cow or a goat after death,† naturally the heart would quake at the idea of slaughter. Secondly, in the Indian climate animal food was not so much of a necessity as in many other parts of the world, while the abundance of grains, fruits and vegetables gradually weaned the Indo-Aryans from their meat-eating habit. Thirdly, the institution of Brahmacharya led to extreme frugality and abstemiousness in regard to food during the period of study which lasted for twelve to forty-eight years, or the whole of life, as the case might be. The abstention from meat diet for so long a period in one's early youth often tended to produce a permanent repulsion from that kind of food throughout life, and the habits of a Brahmachari's life being much praised and glorified,

* For suggestions of the Dravidian origin of the theory of transmigration of souls, see Gough's *Philosophy of the Upanishads* and Biown's *Studies in honour of Bloomfield*. The attempts made by the old commentators on the Upanishads and some modern scholars to find references to transmigration in the Rigveda and the earlier Vedic literature have succeeded in collecting only some vague and improbable allusions not worthy of consideration. Even the Brahmanas do not show any general acceptance of the doctrine. Clear references about the doctrine are to be found only in some of the Upanishads.

† "य इह कपूयचरणा अभ्याशो ह यत्ते कपूयां योनिमापद्येरन् श्वयोनिं वा सूकरयोनिं वा" (Ch. Up. V. 10. 7)

those people, who followed a life of studying and teaching, sometimes sought to continue those habits for a longer period. The study of certain sacred and serious subjects is forbidden to a man immediately after eating meat (Sankhayana VI. 1. 7). Fourthly, the extreme usefulness of cows and bulls on the Indian plains was soon realised by the Vedic Indians, like the Arabs with regard to camels. The cow's milk being the nearest approach to human milk and possessing excellent food value, the cow's dung and urine possessing effective hygienic and manuring properties, the bulls being the most suitable animals for the purposes of ploughing and cart-drawing in India,— all these facts were known to the Vedic Indians, as also the fact that the bovine species does not multiply so quickly as sheep and goats, not to speak of pigs and other animals. Fifthly, among the Vedic Indians coins, if any, were very limited in circulation, and cattle constituted the principal medium of exchange. A man was regarded rich or poor according to the large or small number of cows he possessed. Gifts of cattle to deserving priests were considered highly meritorious and were frequently and freely made by princes and nobles in payment of fees for the performance of sacrifices. Even wives were sometimes purchased from their parents by offering a certain number of cows. The manifold services obtained from cows and bulls

naturally brought home to the minds of the people their economic value as property. This is sensed in the well-known passage of the Atharvaveda which contains the terrible imprecations against the robbers of Brahmans' cows. The Sutras lay down a heavy punishment for those who wilfully injure or destroy other men's cattle. The fine for killing a cow is one hundred cows and a bull and a vow of continence for three years (Gautama XXII. 18), though the offence is regarded as only a minor sin, *upapataka* (XXI. 11). Sixthly, the cow being the source of some of the essential things required for sacrifices, such as milk, clarified butter, cow-dung, etc., and sacrifices being all in all to the Vedic Aryans, some sort of sacredness came to be associated with the cow. "Cows are auspicious purifiers, upon cows depend the worlds. Cows alone make sacrificial oblations possible, cows take away every sin. The urine of cows, their dung, clarified butter, milk, sour milk, and Gorochana—those six excellent productions of a cow are always propitious." (Vishnu XXIII. 57-59) Hence we find in the Srauta Sutras that at the Agnyupasthana, or the ceremony of homage to the fires, the Ahavaniya fire was honoured first, next the cow from which the milk was taken, then the Garhapatya fire and then the cow. As the cow was the repository of sacrificial oblations while the Brahman was the repository of the mantras of sacrifices, the two were

bracketted together in later days as regards their sacredness and inviolability. The beginning of this close association of Brahman and cow can be traced to the Sutra literature. "(The study of the Vedas is to be stopped) in presence of a Brahman who has not had his meal, and of cows that have eaten nothing." (Sankhayana IV. 7. 50). "A Snataka shall not touch with his foot a Brahman, a cow, nor any other venerable being." (Apastamba I. 11. 31. 6). "A cow or a Brahman having met with a calamity, one must not eat on that day." (Vishnu LXVIII. 4). While all other animals are to be washed before sacrifice the cow because of its sacredness does not require washing. "If an animal is to be sacrificed, let him wash it, if it is not a cow." (Paraskara III. 11. 1). Though cow-worship had not yet come into vogue, some sort of divinity was attached to the cow even as early as the time of the Rigveda, as has been stated before.

All these ideas—the aversion from animal food, the theory of transmigration of souls, the economic value of cattle wealth, the sanctity of cow—slowly brought about a reaction, imperceptible and feeble in its origin, against the sacrifice of animals, and particularly of cows. Of the sights shown to the sage Bhrigu by Varuna in the Inferno one was the spirit of the slaughtered animals cutting up and devouring their slayer man who had killed and eaten animals without proper ritual knowledge

(S. P. Br. XI. 6. 1; Jaim. Br. I. 42-44). First of all, good cows ceased to the slaughtered except on ceremonial occasions. Kautilya forbids the killing of milch cows, calves, etc. for butchers' stalls, but not for sacrificial purposes (Artha. II. 26). Secondly, in cases where cow-sacrifice had been compulsory, option was now given to the sacrificer to offer a goat, and where animal sacrifice had been compulsory the sacrificer was given permission to offer vegetable food like rice, barley, sesamum, etc. The beginnings of such ahimsa feeling may be traced in the Aitareya Brahmana VI. 8, where it is said that "the gods at first took man for their victim. As he was taken, medha (i.e. the sacrifice or the spirit) went out of him. It entered the horse. Therefore the horse became the sacrificial animal. Then the gods took the horse, but as he was taken, the medha went out of him. It entered the ox. Therefore the ox became the sacrificial animal. The same happened with the ox. Afterwards the sheep, then the goat, and at last the earth became the victim. From the earth rice was produced and rice was offered in the form of purodasa in lieu of the sacrificial animal." On the last Ashtaka "a cow or a goat is the animal to be sacrificed, or a mess of cooked food should be offered, or he may optionally offer food to a cow." (Sankhayana III. 14. 3-4). A she-goat of one colour can be substituted for a cow for sacrifice at the cremation

ground to cover the dead body with her limbs (Asvalayana IV. 2 6). At the construction of a new house "a black cow, or a white goat, or only milk-rice should be offered." (Khadira IV. 2. 17-18).

But animal sacrifice had been of so long standing among the Aryans and such was the respect for the authority of the Vedas which made it obligatory to sacrifice with flesh offerings, that the abolition of sacrifices, even of cows, became a very slow process, affecting only a very small minority, the intellectual section, of the people, and might not have succeeded at all if Jainism and Buddhism had not overwhelmed the country and the mass of the people with the teachings of Ahimsa and inefficacy of sacrificial rites. Even the Sutra-writer Vishnu, who makes a strong advocacy of vegetarianism by stating that "reflecting upon the origin of flesh and upon the sin of hurting or confining animated creatures, one must obstain from animal food of any kind.... Those two, he who performs a horse-sacrifice annually for a hundred years and he who does not eat meat, shall both obtain the same recompense for their virtue" (LI. 72, 76), opines that "it is for sacrifices that beasts have been created by the Self-existent (God) himself. Sacrificing causes the whole universe to prosper; therefore the slaughter of beasts for a sacrifice is no slaughter." (LI. 61). On the other hand, Gautama Buddha preaches in the

Brahmanadhammikasutta of the Suttanipata, "Like unto a mother, a father, a brother, and other relatives the cows are our best friends, in which medicines are produced. They give food, and they give strength, they likewise give a good complexion and happiness; knowing the real state of this, the good Brahmans of old did not kill cows. And then the king, the lord of chariots, instructed by the (bad) Brahmans, caused many hundred thousand cows to be slain in offerings. Then the gods, the manes, Indra, the Asuras, and the Rakshasas cried out: 'This is injustice,' because of the weapon striking the cows There were formerly three diseases: desire, hunger and decay, but from the slaying of cattle there came ninety-eight.. So this old and mean Dharma is blamed by the wise, where people see such a one, they blame the sacrificing priest."

How prejudices die hard is illustrated by the story of Nahusha in the Udyogaparva of the Mahabharata. The king Nahusha was cursed and hurled down from heaven by the great sage Agastya because when questioned he ventured to cast doubts on the Vedic injunctions for the sacrifice of cows and offered bodily insult to a Brahman. Moreover, human fondness for animal food could not be easily got over. Inspite of injunctions by reforming law-givers like Sankhayana (II. 16. 1), "Only at the Madhuparka, and at the Soma

sacrifice, at the sacred rites for manes and gods animals may be killed, not elsewhere," the mass of the people during the Sutra period remained addicted to meat-eating, and with all the numerous occasions for the slaughter of animals for religious purposes throughout the year still required the existence of butchers' stalls in the markets. Even Asoka could not entirely forbid the killing of animals in the middle of the third century B.C., but only sought to restrict it by forbidding the slaughter of animals on a number of days in the year, and of particular species of animals, and of animals which were of no use to man either as food or for decorative and medicinal purposes. He included the breeding bull but not the cow in the list of animals not to be slaughtered. In the Jatakas, for instance, the Gahapati Jataka, we find that respectable people too had no scruple in eating cow's meat.

Actions causing loss of caste

The omission to get initiated involved loss of caste on the part of all twice-born men. But there was considerable latitude given, much more than at present, to any party willing to come back into the fold of the initiated, however long the period of default. "If the proper time for initiation has passed, he shall observe for the space of two months the duties of a student, and after that he may be initiated.... He, whose father and grandfather have not

been initiated, is called 'a slayer of the Brahman.' Intercourse, eating and intermarriage with such should be avoided. If such men wish it they may perform the following expiation. In the same manner as for the first neglect of the initiation, they shall do penance for one year instead of two months. Afterwards they may be initiated, and then they must bathe daily." (Apastamba I. 1. 1. 23-31). A fallen Brahman or twice-born family could thus be retaken into the community even after generations of un-Aryan or Mlechchha life.

"The murderer of a Brahman, he who drinks spirituous liquor, the violator of a Guru's bed,* he who has connection with the female relatives of his mother and of his father within six degrees, or with sisters and their

* The Chhandogya Upanishad (V. 10. 9), too, condemns as sinners the stealer of gold, the drinker of spirituous liquor, the murderer of a Brahman, the violator of Guru's bed, and their associates. The Mahabharata (Santi 34), however, mentions some exceptions to the above general rule. "There is no sin in killing even a Brahman learned in the Vedas if he comes to fight as an enemy with weapons. One who has drunk spirituous liquor unknowingly or for the sake of saving his life from serious illness under the advice of a physician can get rid of his sin by some purificatory ceremony...A disciple does not commit any sin by cohabiting with his Guru's wife under the orders of the Guru, as was done by the disciple of Rishi Uddalaka who produced a son, Svetaketu, in the womb of his Guru's wife. There is no sin in speaking falsehood if it be for saving one's own or another's life, for the benefit of one's Guru, and at the time of dalliance with wife or at the time of marriage ..If another man's wife being stung by passion comes of her own accord and desires sexual connection, no sin is incurred by cohabiting with her."

daughters, he who steals the gold of a Brahman, an atheist, he who constantly repeats blameable acts, he who does not cast off persons guilty of a crime causing loss of caste, and he who forsakes blameless relatives, become outcasts. Likewise those who instigate others to acts causing loss of caste; and he who for a year associates with outcasts. To be an outcast means to be deprived of the right to follow the lawful occupations of twice-born men, and to be deprived after death of the rewards of meritorious deeds....He who forsakes his priest and teacher unjustifiably becomes an outcast." (Gautama XXI; Vasistha I. 20-23). One should cast off even "his father who assassinates a king, who sacrifices for Sudras, who sacrifices for himself accepting money from Sudras, who divulges the Vedas to persons not authorised to study them, who kills a learned Brahman, who dwells with men of the lowest castes, or cohabits with a female of the lowest castes." (Gautama XX. 1).

Among acts which make men impure (ashuchikarani) but not degraded from the caste (pataniyani), according to Apastamba, are "the cohabitation of Aryan women with Sudras, eating the flesh of forbidden animals, eating what is left by a Sudra, the cohabitation of Aryans with low-caste women. But some declare that these acts also cause a man to lose his caste." (I. 7. 21). According to Kautilya, "those who voluntarily partake of

what is forbidden as food or drink shall be outcast." (Artha. IV. 13). The Mahabharata, however, enunciates a sensible rule when it is said that "a rishi can eat anything when a man is as hungry as I (Viswamitra) am; one kind of meat is as good as another. It is not a serious matter if one eats unclean food, provided one does not tell a lie about it." (Santi. 141). According to Baudhayana (II. 1. 2), among the greater offences causing loss of caste are making voyages by sea, dealing in forbidden merchandise, serving Sudras, begetting a son on a female of the Sudra caste. The penance prescribed for these offences is that the offenders "shall eat every fourth meal-time a little food, bathe at the time of the three libations in the morning, noon and evening, passing the day standing and the night sitting. After the lapse of three years they throw off their guilt." Among the lesser offences, stated by the same author, are following the profession of medicine, sacrificing for many, living by the profession of acting and pursuing the occupation of a teacher of dancing, singing and acting. "The expiation for these offences is to live as an outcast during two years."

"Brahmans who do not study the Veda nor keep sacred fires become equal to Sudras...One who does not know the Veda cannot be called a Brahman, nor he who lives by trade, nor he who lives as an actor, nor he who obeys a

Sudra's commands, nor he who like a thief takes the property of others, nor he who makes his living by the practice of medicine." (Vasistha III. 1-3). The Mahabharata, however, states that "even those Brahmans who do not observe the required ceremonials, who are cheats, robbers, sellers of animals, and who follow the profession of a trader, become fit for being invited to a Sraddha dinner if they drink Soma after offering it to gods." (Anushasana, 23). According to Vasistha, the practice of usury is called a greater sin than even the murder of a learned Brahman. Such declarations, however, must not be interpreted literally but should be estimated according to their rhetorical value.

Rules concerning loss of caste did not grow uniformly in all parts of the country. Different localities had customary laws on the subject, though some of the law-givers would not acknowledge them if they conflicted with the laws of the sacred books. "There is a dispute regarding five practices both in the south and in the north. We will explain those peculiar to the south. They are, to eat in the company of an uninitiated person, to eat in the company of one's wife, to eat stale food, to marry the daughter of a maternal uncle or of a paternal aunt. Now the customs peculiar to the north are, to deal in wool, to drink rum, to sell animals that have teeth in the upper and in the lower jaws, to follow the trade of

arms, to go to sea. He, who follows these practices in any other country than where they prevail, commits sin. For each of these customs the rule of the locality should be considered the authority. Gautama declares that that is false. And one should not take heed of either set of practices because they are opposed to the tradition of the Sishtas. The country of the Aryas (Aryavarta) lies to the east of the region where the river Saraswati disappears, to the west of the Black-forest, to the north of the Paripatra mountains, to the south of the Himalaya. The rule of conduct which prevails there is authoritative. Some declare the country between the rivers Jumna and Ganges to be the Aryavarta....The inhabitants of Avanti, of Anga, of Magadha, of Surashtra, of the Deccan, of Upavrit, of Sindh, and the Sauviras are of mixed origin. He who has visited the countries of the Arattas, Karaskaras, Pundras, Sauviras, Vangas, Kalingas, or Pranunas shall offer a Punastoma or a Sarvaprishti." (Baudhayana I. 1. 2).

The ceremony of excommunicating is as follows. "A slave or a hired servant shall fetch an impure vessel from a dust-heap, fill it with water taken from the pot of a female slave, and with his face turned towards the south upset it with his foot, pronouncing the sinner's name and saying, 'I deprive so and so of water.' All the kinsmen of the outcast shall then touch the slave passing their sacrificial cords

over the right shoulder and under the left arm, and untying the locks on their heads. Having bathed, they shall enter the village....But if an outcast is purified by performing a penance, his kinsmen shall, after he has become pure, fill a golden vessel with water from a very holy lake or a river and make him bathe in water taken from that vessel...." (Gautama XX; Vasistha XV).

The rules concerning loss of caste touched the Sudras very little. In this respect they enjoyed great liberty, and, as Manu declares, "they cannot commit an offence causing loss of caste." There were, of course, certain rules for keeping clean those Sudras who were engaged as domestic servants, but the mass of them were only told that they would gain praise if they imitated the practices of the twice-born men. Nothing, so far as this world was concerned, if they would not.

Brahmacharya or studentship

The Apastamba Dharma Sutra I. 1 gives the following description of Brahmacharya. "The initiation is the consecration in accordance with the texts of the Veda of a *male* (of the three higher castes) who is desirous of sacred knowledge." This is regarded as a second birth and hence the initiated people are called twice-born. "Let him initiate a Brahman in spring, a Kshatriya in summer, a Vaisya in autumn; a Brahman in the eighth

year after his conception, a Kshatriya in the eleventh year and a Vaisya in the twelfth year." The ceremony may be deferred because of incapacity for study or other reasons to the ages of sixteen, twenty-two and twenty-four in the case of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas respectively, after which the initiation can take place after due expiation.

He who has been initiated shall dwell as a student in the house of his teacher and not with any body else for forty-eight years or less, but never less than twelve years. "The duties of a student consist in acts to please the teacher, the observance of rules conducive to his own welfare, and industry in studying." He shall wear only one piece of cloth to cover his nakedness and preferably a skin as an upper garment. "He shall avoid honey, meat, perfumes, garlands, ointments, carriage, shoes, umbrellas, sleep in the daytime, love, anger, covetousness, perplexity, garrulity, musical instruments, bathing (for pleasure), cleaning the teeth, elation, dancing, singing, slandering, and fear." (Gaut. II. 13). "If a student eats meat which has been given to him even as leavings by his teacher, he shall perform a Krichchhra penance of twelve days' duration, and afterwards finish his vow. The same penance must be performed if he eats food given at a Sraddha or by a person who is impure on account of a recent death or birth." (Vasistha XXIII. 11-12). So great is the

emphasis put upon the avoidance of luxury that Apastamba goes to the extreme by quoting a Brahmana to declare, "He shall be dusty, he shall have dirty teeth, and speak the truth." (I. 2. 7. 11). "Let him not be addicted to gossiping; be discreet; talk with women only for what is absolutely necessary; be forgiving; be restraining of his organs; be untiring in fulfilling his duties; modest; possessed of self-command; energetic; free from anger and envy." He must not gaze at and touch women, if there is danger of a breach of chastity, must not gamble, take things not offered, and injure animate beings. The penance for a student who has broken the vow of chastity is to sacrifice an ass on a cross-road to the goddess Nirriti, put on the skin of the ass, and through one year to go about for alms proclaiming his deed (Paraskara G. S. III. 12).

A Brahman for life and a Kshatriya or a Vaisya at least during the period of studentship must not touch spirituous drink. A student should go in the morning and in the evening to beg for food, should offer all he has obtained by begging to his teacher, and eat when ordered to do so by the teacher. He can not eat forbidden food like meat, honey, condiments, etc., even with the permission of the teacher, or as leavings from the teacher's table. He shall fetch fuel and water for the use of his teacher. He shall get up from bed before his teacher and go to bed after him. He shall do

nothing improper in the presence of his teacher, such as "leaning, stretching out his legs, spitting, laughing, yawning, cracking the joints of the fingers." "He shall do what is serviceable to his teacher, and shall not contradict him." He shall be very attentive the whole day long, never allowing his mind to wander from the lesson during the time devoted to studying. And at other times he shall be attentive to the business of the teacher. And during the time for rest he shall give his mind to doubtful passages of the lesson learnt." He shall place the sacred fuel on the fire every morning and evening according to prescribed rules.

After finishing the course of study he shall procure in a righteous manner the fee to be given to the teacher according to his power, and for this he can beg from even a Sudra without dishonour or sin. He should show reverence not only to his teacher, but to his teacher's wife, and also to the senior fellow-students. Even after his return home on the completion of his study, the proper behaviour towards his teacher and the rest must be observed by him to the end. "The teacher is chief among all Gurus, higher even than the parents."

"Now the conduct of a teacher towards his pupil will be explained. Loving him like his son, and full of attention, he shall

teach him the sacred science, without hiding anything in the whole law. And he shall not use him for his own purposes to the detriment of his studies, except in times of distress. A teacher who neglects the instruction of his pupil does no longer remain a teacher. If the pupil commits faults, the teacher shall always reprove him. Threats, fasting, bathing in cold water and banishment from the teacher's presence are the punishments which are to be employed according to the greatness of the fault, until the pupil leaves off sinning." "As a rule, a pupil shall not be punished corporally. If no other course is possible, he may be corrected with a thin rope or a thin cane. If the teacher strikes him with any other instrument, he shall be punished by the king." If the teacher transgresses the law of piety through carelessness or knowingly the pupil shall point it out to him privately. But if the teacher be an incorrigible sinner or incompetent to teach, the pupil may leave him and go to another person.

As the principal occupations of a good Brahman were studying and teaching with occasional work at sacrifices, the life of a Brahmachari came to be regarded as an ideal for even ex-student householders. Besides, the influence of Brahmacharya extending over a period of from twelve to forty-eight years could not but mould the character in a certain fashion, as the modern public school

training, though for a much shorter period, does in England. And this influence was more manifest over those who chose to adopt the life of a Sannyasin immediately on the completion of their studies without entering into a married life, which according to some was not compulsory (Gaut. III. 1). The life of a Snataka, or one who has passed out of the student life, very much resembles that of a student, which shows that there is not to be a sharp deviation from the manners and practices of the student life in those of a householder. Slowly and steadily the standard of morality and manners was much elevated among the Brahmans in particular, but at the same time the defects peculiar to professed scholars, viz. unworldiness, inelasticity, narrow-mindedness, pride, class-feeling, began to strongly manifest themselves among the scholar class in ancient India. Unfortunately the pride of race and the pride of sacerdotalism had already created almost unbridgeable gulfs between class and class, and when to them was added the pride of scholasticism, the difference between the higher castes and the lower, between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans, became more rigid than before. Thus the good effect of the strictness of Brahmacharya in specialising learning and enforcing high moral discipline was neutralised by the increased rigidness and hauteur of caste, which

is one of the many factors making India a land of contrasts.

Marriage rules in the Sutras

The marriage rules in the Sutras are characterised by great strictness and conceived in a strongly puritan spirit, Apastamba being the most puritan of the Sutra-writers. Biological and moral considerations together sought to ban not only marriage within the family circle but marriage within kinship either on the father's or the mother's side. "A householder shall take a wife who is younger than himself." "A marriage may be contracted between persons who have not the same Gotra and Pravara and who are not related within six degrees on the father's or mother's side." (Apastamba II. 5. 11. 15-16; Gautama IV. 2-5). Then follow the eight kinds of marriage which cover all possible means by which union can be effected between a man and a woman, viz. (1) Brahma, (2) Prajapatya, (3) Arsha, (4) Daiva, (5) Gandharva, (6) Asura, (7) Rakshasa, (8) Paisacha. In primitive societies seizing by force or buying a woman for wife is a very common form of marriage, and there are ample evidences that such marriages were not uncommon in early Vedic times. But the Sutra-writers could not reconcile them to their cultured ideas, and hence without being able to ban them altogether from the heterogenous mass of the

Indian people spoke disapprovingly of them as not being fit for good Brahmans. The lowest form of marriage, according to them, is the Paisacha marriage which is nothing but rape by deceit, pure and simple, and which is called marriage in order to compel the violator to accept the duties and obligations of a husband. It must, however, be understood that the woman concerned did not belong to a husband at the time because a husband's right cannot be lost by any means. "Animals, land and females are not lost to the owner by another's possession." (Gaut. XII. 39). So even the Paisacha marriage had its utility in society. Still such was the disgust felt by men with strong moral sensibilities like Apastamba that he would not call it a marriage at all. Marriage by purchase (Asura marriage), and marriage by force (Rakshasa marriage), and marriage by secret wooing (Gandharva marriage), three of the most primitive forms of marriage, are considered to be undesirable, if not unlawful (Gaut. IV. 14), because probably they make difficult the strict enforcement of the rules prohibiting intercaste and Sagotra marriages. Some latitude, however, had to be given to non-Brahman castes, as, for instance, a fighting soldier could not be prevented from taking to wife a woman by force, especially after victories over the enemy. Thus the actual conditions in society are probably more truly represented in the less

idealistic and puritanical writings of Baudhayana when he says that "among these the Asura and Rakshasa marriages agree with the law of the Kshatriyas, for power is their attribute; the Gandharva and the Paisacha are lawful for Vaisyas and Sudras, for Vaisyas and Sudras are not particular about their wives, because they are allowed to subsist by such low occupations as husbandry and service. Some recommend the Gandharva rite for all castes because it is based on mutual affection." (I. 11. 20. 12-16). The desirable forms of marriage are the Daiva (i.e. gift of a daughter to the officiating priest at a sacrifice by the father), the Arsha (in which the bridegroom has to make a fixed present of a bull and a cow to the father of the bride), the Prajapatya (i.e. if a bride is given to a suitor on his demand for the joint performance of sacred duties by the two) and the Brahma (i.e. giving away the daughter with suitable garments and ornaments by the father to a selected young man from a good family). Of these the Brahma marriage is regarded as the best. The Gandharva marriage is forbidden to a Brahman, but not to a Kshatriya (Vishnu XXIV. 28), though according to some, is lawful for all castes.

Early Marriage in the Sutras

Besides the fear of inter-caste marriage and consanguineous marriage, the fear of an

illegitimate child being born in the womb of the wife troubled the Sutra-writers to no small extent. Apart from considerations of morality, there was the belief that a lawful son was essential for offering oblations, without which the departed soul would get no sustenance in the next world. Now if the son had a secret stain of illegitimacy in his blood, the oblations offered by him would go not to the apparent father, but to the actual begetter. Thus Apastamba observes, "A Brahmana says, 'The son belongs to the begetter.' Now they quote also the following from the Veda: Having considered myself formerly a father, I shall not now allow any longer my wives to be approached by other men, since they have declared that a son belongs to the begetter in the world of Yama. The giver of the seed carries off the son after death in Yama's world; therefore they guard their wives, fearing the seed of strangers. Carefully watch over the procreation of your children, lest stranger seed be sown on your soil (i.e. in the womb of your wife)." (II. 6. 13). "Carefully watch the procreation of your offspring, lest strange seed fall on your soil. After death the son belongs to the begetter; through carelessness a husband makes the procreation of a son useless." (Baudhayana II. 2. 3. 35). Of course, in the absence of a self-begotten son substitutes could be lawfully acquired by purchase, adoption, or even Niyoga, though

Apastamba does not tolerate Niyoga. "The reward in the next world resulting from observing the restrictions of the law is preferable to offspring obtained by means of Niyoga." (II. 10. 27. 7). These ideas were a great contributory factor in the matter of lowering the age of girls for marriage. In the case of grown-up girls it was difficult to prevent Gandharva marriage leading to intermixture of castes, and to guarantee that no intercourse had taken place before marriage causing "a stranger seed to be sown on your soil." The exaggerated idea of physical chastity among the Brahmans owes its existence as much to principles of morality as to the belief in the necessity of a son begotten by himself for offering food to the deceased in the next world.

Had early marriage had its natural growth among the Vedic Indians, or had it been adopted from some primitive savage tribes of India among whom the age of puberty is much lower than that in civilized communities,* both the bridegroom and the bride would have been of tender age. But while the minimum

* Megasthenes' accounts do not show that child marriage had become a widely prevalent custom in India in the 4th century B.C. Rather the contrary is probable, as he states that infant marriage was in practice in the Pandya country in the extreme south of the Peninsula. "The women there become marriageable at the age of seven, and the men live for forty years at the most." This description, though somewhat exaggerated, might have been true of some non-Aryan tribes, among whom, as among the Pandyas, early marriage was a necessity.

age of the bridegroom could never be less than twenty-five after the completion of Brahmacharya, "a girl should be given in marriage before she attains the age of puberty. He who neglects it, commits sin. Some declare that a girl shall be given in marriage before she wears clothes." (Gaut. XVIII. 21-23). "Out of fear of the appearance of the menses let the father marry his daughter while she still runs about naked. For if she stays in the house after the age of puberty sin falls on the father." (Vasistha XVII. 70). Gobhila (Grihya Sutra III. 4. 6) says that "the best, however, is a naked (nagnika)* girl." The custom of early marriage or infant marriage was being newly introduced in the Aryan society, and all the existing rules of practice could not yet be modified and adjusted to that end. Thus while in later times when early marriage had become practically universal there grew up the custom of leaving the bride with her parents unvisited by the husband until the attainment of puberty, the consummation following a "second marriage" ceremony, during the Sutra period such practice had not yet arisen, and the general rule was that "through a period of three nights (after marriage) they shall eat no saline food; they shall sleep on the ground; through one year they shall refrain from conjugal intercourse, or through a period

* A secondary meaning of Nagnika is one who has not attained puberty.

of twelve nights, or of six nights, or at least of three nights." (Paraskara I. 8. 21; Asvalayana I. 8. 10-12). "After three nights have passed they should cohabit, according to some." (Gobhila II. 5. 7). "Through a period of three nights (after marriage) they should avoid eating saline food and drinking milk, and should sleep together without having conjugal intercourse... Thenceforward he should behave as required by circumstances." (Khadira I. 4).*

The verses to be addressed by the bridegroom at the conclusion of the Saptapadi ceremony are as follows: "Now that we have taken the seven steps together, be thou my companion. Let us be companions. Let me have thy companionship. May I never part from thee, nor thou from me. Let us be united. Let us always take counsel together with glad hearts and mutual love. May we grow in strength and prosperity together. Now

* The following passages among others from Vatsyayana's Kamasutra describing the conduct of the husband towards the newly-wedded bride immediately after marriage show that even at a later period than the time of the Sutra law-books youthful maidens as well as immature girls were to be found as wives. "सङ्गतयोस्त्रिरात्रमधःशय्या ब्रह्मचर्यं क्षारलवणवर्जमाहारः...उपक्रमेत विस्रम्भयेच्च न तु ब्रह्मचर्यमतिवर्त्तेत। इति वात्स्यायनः ॥...दीपालोके विगाढयौवनायाः पूर्व्वसंस्तुतायाः बालाया अपूर्व्वायाश्चान्धकारे ॥...तया सह पुष्पावचयं ग्रथनं गृहकं दुहितृकाक्रीड़ायोजनं भक्तपानकरणमिति कुर्व्वीत परिचयस्य वयसश्चानुरूप्यात्।" (Bk. II. chs. 2 and 3). While in some cases the wife was a fully developed young woman, in others the wife was a mere child who was to be humoured with toys, sand-houses, clay-cakes, etc.

we are one in mind, deeds and desires. Thou art Rik, I am Saman ; I am the sky, thou art the earth; I am the semen, thou art its bearer; I am the mind, thou are the tongue. Follow me faithfully that we may have wealth and children together. Come thou of sweet speech." The language is not at all suitable for babbling infants.

Whether the Sudras had had early marriage among them from before it is difficult to say. But it suited them better now than the Brahmans. Firstly, as there was no initiation or Brahmacharya for the Sudras the bridegroom could also be of tender age, and hence no unnatural disparity of age would come between the husband and the wife. Secondly, as the higher-caste people could marry Sudra wives while the Sudras were confined within their own caste, and as the higher-caste masters might take undue liberty with the unmarried damsels of the slave population, it was to the interest of the Sudras to marry young to keep as many women for themselves as lawful wives as possible. Thirdly, the Vedic rules and mantras of wedding ceremonies standing in conflict with the custom of early marriage did not worry the Sudras very much as it was not yet compulsory for them to follow the Vedic rules.

Inter-caste marriage and mixed castes

However much the Sutra-writers wished

for the prohibition of inter-caste marriages, some allowance had to be made for the polygamous impulses of the male sex in a patriarchal society and also for the lust for beauty and wealth overriding considerations of caste barriers. If the principle of monogamy could be rigidly enforced, the inter-caste marriages might have been reduced to negligible figures and eventually altogether abolished. Apastamba (II. 5. 11) declares, "If he has a wife who is willing and able to perform her share of the religious duties and who bears sons, he shall not take a second." But it seemed to have remained a pious wish. The ordinary rule was—"Three wives are allowed to a Brahman, in accordance with the order of the castes (i.e. one each from the three higher castes), two to a Rajanya (i.e. one each from the Rajanya and the Vaisya castes), one to a Vaisya (i.e. from his own caste). One Sudra wife besides to all, according to some, without using mantras at the ceremony of wedding." (Paraskara I. 4. 8-11). It cannot be said with what success the rule forbidding a Kshatriya prince to marry a Brahman wife was enforced during this period, though the declared consequence was that "those born in the inverse order (from fathers of a lower and mothers of a higher caste) stand outside the pale of the sacred law (i.e. do not possess the rights of initiation, etc.)" (Gaut. IV. 25), and that "sons begotten on women of higher castes by men of

lower castes shall be treated like sons begotten by a Brahman on a Sudra wife (in the matter of inheritance)." (Gaut. XXVIII. 45). "On women of higher castes than their husbands sons are begotten, who are despised by the twice-born" (Vishnu XVI. 3), and they do not possess the right of inheritance (XV. 37). In order to discourage inter-caste marriage even among the Aryans fanciful theories were started about the formation of mixed castes, i.e. castes different from those of the parents, for the offspring of mixed unions. The lists of cross-breeds differing in different books,*

* "Children born in the regular order of wives of the next, second or third lower castes become Savarnas, Ambasthas, Ugras, Nishadas, Daushyantas or Parasavas. Children born in the inverted order of wives of higher castes become Sutas, Magadhas, Ayogavas, Kshattris, Vaidehakas, or Chandalas. Some declare that a woman of the Brahman caste has borne successively to husbands of the four castes sons who are Brahmans, Sutas, Magadhas or Chandalas ; and that a woman of the Kshatriya caste has borne to the same, Murdhavasiktas, Kshatriyas, Dhivaras, Pulkasas ; further, a woman of the Vaisya caste to the same, Bhrijyakanthas, Mahishyas, and Vaidehas ; and a woman of the Sudra caste to the same, Parasavas, Yavanas, Karanas, and Sudras." (Gautama IV). "They declare that the offspring of a Sudra and of a female of the Brahman caste becomes a Chandala ; that of a Sudra and of a female of the Kshatriya caste, a Vaina ; that of a Sudra and of a female of the Vaisya caste, an Antyavasayin. They declare that the son begotten by a Vaisya on a female of the Brahman caste becomes a Ramaka ; the son begotten by the same on a female of the Kshatriya caste, a Pulkasa. They declare that the son begotten by a Kshatriya on a female of the Brahman caste becomes a Suta... Children begotten by Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas on females of the next lower, second lower and third lower castes become respectively Ambasthas, Ugras, and Nishadas. The son of a Brahman and of a Sudra woman is a Parasava." (Vasistha XVIII).

and different lists sometimes being given in one and the same book showed that free rein was given to the imagination of the writers and that the products of their imagination were not yet standardised. According to Vishnu mixed castes were formed only by the unions of lower-caste men with higher-caste women, while the offspring of lower-caste women by higher-caste men took the ranks of their mothers (XVI. 2-6). In actual practice the offspring of mixed unions among the three higher castes still took the rank of the father though the merit of marrying within one's own caste was constantly dinned into the ears. "Virtuous sons born of wives of equal caste and wedded according to approved rites sanctify their father's family." (Gaut. IV. 29).

"A Brahman begets on a female of the Kshatriya caste a Brahman, on a female of the Vaisya caste an Ambastha, on a female of the Sudra caste a Nishada, or, according to some, a Parasava. A Kshatriya begets on a female of the Vaisya caste an Ugra. A Vaisya begets on a female of the Sudra caste a Rathakara. A Sudra begets on a female of the Vaisya caste a Magadha, on a female of the Kshatriya caste a Kshattri, but on a female of the Brahman caste a Chandala. A Vaisya begets on a female of the Kshatriya caste an Ayogava, on a female of the Brahman caste a Suta... An Ugra begets on a female of the Kshattri caste a Svapaka ; a Vaidehaka on a female of the Ambastha caste, a Vaina ; a Nishada on a female of the Sudra caste, a Pulkasa ; a Sudra on a female of the Nishada caste a Kukkutaka." (Baudhayana I. 9. 17).

"Among these, the son of a Sudra with a Vaisya woman is called Ayogava. The Pukkasa and Magadha are sons of a Vaisya and Sudra respectively with a Kshatriya woman. The Chandala, Vaidehaka, and Suta are the sons of a Sudra, Vaisya and Kshatriya respectively with a Brahman woman." (Vishnu XVI).

That the children of higher-caste fathers and lower-caste mothers among the Aryans were treated not very differently from those of parents of the same caste can be inferred from the laws of inheritance. "The son of a Brahman by a Kshatriya wife being the eldest and endowed with good qualities shares equally with a younger brother born of a Brahman mother. But he shall not obtain the additional share of an eldest son. If there are sons begotten by a Brahman on wives of the Kshatriya and Vaisya castes the division of the estate between them takes place according to the same rules as between the son by a Kshatriya wife and the son by a Brahman wife." (Gaut. XXVIII. 35-37). Even this very small distinction in the matter of inheritance is not recognised by all Sutra-writers. According to Baudhayana, "if there is a son of equal caste and a son of a wife of the next lower caste, the son born of the wife of the next lower caste may take the share of the eldest, provided he be endowed with good qualities." (II.2.3.12). Apastamba says, "He should during his life-time divide his wealth equally among his sons, excepting the eunuch, the mad man and the outcast... That preference of the eldest son is forbidden by the Shastras." (II. 5. 14). Baudhayana does not attach any blemish to the issues of mixed marriages provided the wife is of the next lower caste to that of the husband. "Sons begotten

on wives of equal or of the next lower castes are called Savarnas (i e. of equal caste)." (I. 8. 16. 6). According to Kautilya's Arthasastra, "sons begotten by Brahmans or Kshatriyas on women of the next lower caste are called Savarnas." (III. 7). Even as late as the time of Manusamhita, "sons begotten by twice-born men on wives of the next lower castes are (treated as) similar to their fathers, but blamed on account of the fault inherent in their mothers." (X. 6).

Union between Aryan and non-Aryan

As in the previous period, marriage between a twice-born male, not excepting a Brahman, and a Sudra female was not forbidden, though great disapproval was expressed by the Sutra-writers towards such a union and greater handicaps and disabilities were put on the recalcitrant party and the offspring. The wedding loses its sanctity as the Vedic mantras are not to be recited on the occasion. "Some declare that twice-born men may marry even a Sudra woman without the recitation of Vedic texts. Let him not act thus. For in consequence of such a marriage the degradation of the family certainly ensues, and after death the loss of heaven." (Vasistha I. 25-27). "No twice-born man shall ever perform his religious duties together with a Sudra wife. A union of a twice-born man with a Sudra wife can never produce religious merit; it is from carnal

desire only that he marries her, being blinded by lust. Men of the first three castes who through folly marry a woman of the lowest caste quickly degrade their families and go down to the state of Sudras." (Vishnu XXVI. 4-6). Begetting a son on a Sudra woman is an offence causing loss of caste (Baudh. II. 1. 2. 7) which can be expiated by partaking of boiled barley-gruel mixed with cow's urine, liquid cowdung, sour milk, milk and butter during seven days (IV. 6. 5-6). The Brahman whose only wife is a Sudra woman must not be invited to a funeral dinner (Gaut. XV. 18) and his food must not be eaten by a good Brahman (Apastamba I. 6. 18. 33). "He who has been guilty of connexion with a woman of the Sudra caste... shall bathe and sprinkle himself with water, reciting the verses addressed to the Waters or the verses addressed to Varuna or Pavitra, in proportion to the frequency with which the crime has been committed." (Apastamba I. 9. 26. 7, Gautama XXV. 7). The offspring of a higher-caste male and a Sudra female is regarded as being "outside the pale of the sacred law." (Gaut. IV. 26).

"The son by a Sudra wife even, if he be obedient, receives provision for maintenance out of the estate of a Brahman deceased without other male issue." (Gaut. XXVIII. 39). Vishnu, however, allows one-tenth of the property of a Brahman to the son of his Sudra wife if there are sons by other

wives and one-half of his property if there be no other son (XVIII. 5. 32). Thus while the children of a Brahman by wives of the three higher castes were full-fledged members of the sacrificing community and generally took the rank of the father, those by a Sudra wife were treated as more akin to the mother's caste. But there was a provision that if such children and their descendants went on marrying into Brahman families for seven generations they would be washed of all stain and gain unqualified admission into the Brahman rank (Gaut. IV. 22). It is almost certain that very little disqualification attached to the offspring of a Vaisya-Sudra marriage, and that little vigilance was exercised to keep up the distinction between the children of Vaisya and Sudra mothers by a Vaisya father, especially when many groups of the Vaisya community had descended to the level of the Sudras. Baudhayana throws some light upon the actual conditions in society in the matter when he says that "the Gandharva and Paisacha marriages are lawful for the Vaisyas and Sudras because Vaisyas and Sudras are not particular about their wives." (I. 11. 20. 13-14). The Kshatriyas, on the other hand, unwilling to be excelled by the Brahmans in the pride of birth were probably more strict than the Vaisyas towards the children of their Sudra wives. That the rules with regard to such offspring were not rigidly observed even

by the Brahmans can be inferred from the occasional employment of such men to exercise priestly functions, as we learn from Latyayana Srautra Sutra IX. 2. 6. So far with regard to marriage with a Sudra woman.

Marrying a woman of the lowest castes like the Chandalas, Paulkasas, etc., was abomination for a member of the Aryan community. "For intercourse with a female of the lowest castes he shall perform a Krichchhra penance for one year. For committing the same sin undesignedly he shall perform the same penance for twelve days." (Gaut. XXIII. 32-33). "The rule for the Krichchhra penance of twelve days is: For three days he must not eat in the evening, and then for three days not in the morning; for three days he must live on food which has been given unasked and three days he must not eat anything." (Apastamba I. 9. 27. 7). Vishnu goes further and states that "by intercourse (knowingly) with a Chandala woman a man becomes her equal in caste. For intercourse unawares with such he must perform the Chandrayana twice." (LIII. 5-6). "He who has had connection with a woman of one of the lowest castes shall be put to death." (V. 43).

Position of woman in the Sutras

Women had practically been reduced to the status of Sudras. Like the latter, they were debarred from the right of initiation and

investment with the sacred string (Ap. I. 1. 1. 8). They had no right to offer burnt oblations (Ap. II. 7. 15. 18). "For female children the ceremonies of Jatakarman, Namadheya, Adityadarshana, Annaprasana, Churakarana should be performed without the sacred texts. The marriage ceremony only has to be performed with the sacred texts for them." (Vishnu XXVII. 13-14; Asvalayana Gr. Sutra I. 16. 16). "Women are considered to have no business with the sacred texts." (Baudh. I. 5. 11. 7). "A woman is never independent with respect to the fulfilment of the sacred law." (Gaut. XVIII. 1).* In many passages woman and Sudra are bracketted together, as in Paraskara II. 8. 3, "He shall avoid seeing women, Sudras, dead bodies, black birds and dogs"; and in Apastamba II. 11. 29. 11, "The knowledge which Sudras and women possess is the completion of all study." "A woman and a Sudra become pure by merely touching water with the lips (unlike twice-born men who be come pure by sipping water)" (Vasistha III. 34). The penance for killing a Brahman woman is the same as that for killing a Sudra (Gaut. XXII. 17; Ap. I. 9. 24. 5; Baudh. I. 10. 19. 3). A wife must not be allowed to share

* Cf. Manu II. 67: "The nuptial ceremony is stated to be the Vedic sacrament for women and to be equivalent to the ceremony of initiation for men, serving the husband equivalent to the residence in the house of the teacher for a man and the household duties equivalent to the daily worship of the sacred fire by men."

food from the same vessel by a Brahmaṇ (Ap. II. 4. 9. 7). "The duty of a woman is to remain subject in her infancy to her father, in her youth to her husband and in her old age to her sons. No sacrifice, no penance and no fasting is allowed to women apart from their husbands; to pay obedience to her lord is the only means for a woman to obtain bliss in heaven. A woman is never fit for independence." (Vishnu XXV. 13-15; Baudh. II. 2. 3. 44-45; Mhb. Anushasana, 20). The scorn for the birth of a female child cannot be more clearly expressed than in the following verses which are to be recited by the husband at the time of the wife's monthly period. "Give birth to a male child; may after him another male be born;...imparting birth of female children to other women may Prajapati put here a man." (Sankh. G. Sutra I. 19. 6).

It is a pleasure in the midst of the general depreciation of woman in the Indian religious and legal literature to come across some rare passages embodying very noble sentiments towards the female sex, such as Manu III. 55-61, and Mahabharata XIII. 46. "Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly

perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers. The houses on which female relations, not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic. Hence men who seek their own welfare should always honour women on holidays and festivals with gifts of ornaments, clothes, and dainty food. In that family, where the husband is pleased with his wife and the wife with her husband, happiness will assuredly be lasting. For if the wife is not radiant with beauty, she will not attract her husband; but if she has no attractions for him, no children will be born." It cannot be denied that even in such passages women are honoured as potential mothers and obedient wives, and they do not much take away from the general cynical tone pervading throughout the literature of the Dharmasastras. Thus Manu declares that a Brahman must shun a sacrifice offered by a woman and that it displeases the gods (IV. 206), and that women who offer the Agnihotra (fire sacrifice) sink into hell (XI. 37). Of course, we should not estimate this attitude of the ancient Indian Brahman sages by the standard of modern civilization. Over two thousand years ago the attitude was practically the same in all countries, and the Indians certainly did not compare unfavourably with the other civilized communities of the time. Confucius, for instance, was not more liberal in his attitude

towards the status of women than Manu. Besides, we must bear in mind that the granting of more independence to women would have been incompatible with the policy of the Aryan whites seeking to maintain the purity of their blood and culture as best as they could in the midst of the swarming mass of blacks.

Increasing respect for mother

One bright feature was the increasing respect for mother. In the essentially patriarchal state of the Rigvedic society the position of the mother had been insignificant as compared with that of the father, and hence no special notice was taken of her. But thanks to the greater contact with the Dravidians with their matriarchal system, the Aryan conquerors of the Gangetic valley began to imbibe a little of the spirit of pre-eminence of the mother, so much so that we come across a large number of sages in the later Vedic period with matronymic surnames like Mahidasa Aitareya, Jatukarnya Katyayaniputra, Krishna Devakiputra, and a number of mother-goddesses, one of the most important of whom was Vashini The Taittiriya Upanishad states, "Let there be no neglect of duties towards the gods and the forefathers Let the mother be a god to thee. Let the father be a god to thee." By the time of the Sutras the position of the mother had become assured. Thus Apastamba remarks, "A

mother does very many acts for her son; therefore he must constantly serve her, though she be fallen." (I. 10. 28. 9). "A man has three great Gurus—his father, mother and spiritual teacher. To them he must always pay obedience... By honouring his mother he gains the present world; by honouring his father, the world of gods; and by paying strict obedience to his spiritual teacher, the world of Brahma." (Vishnu XXXI). Gautama makes the mother higher even than the father and the spiritual teacher (II. 51). Similar is the idea of Vasistha who says that "a mother is a thousand times more venerable than the father," and that "a father who has committed a crime causing loss of caste must be cast off, but a mother does never become an outcast to her son." (XIII. 47-48).

Inspite of such injunctions the Indo-Aryan consciousness of feminine inferiority asserts itself here and there. Thus a Brahmachari may eat a residue of food from his teacher, father, and elder brother, but not from his mother (Ap. I. 1. 4). Again, the rule for a woman to remain subject to her son in her old age, as stated above, is at variance with the professed position of the mother. In fact, the mother-cult in the Indo-Aryan system remains, like a foreign element, incongruous with the general tendency towards the depression of the female sex.

Remarriage of women

The marriage of widows, though not entirely prohibited, is spoken disapprovingly of by all the law-givers. Apastamba prohibits it in II. 6. 13. 4, saying, "If a man approaches a woman who had been once married before, or belongs to a different caste, they both commit a sin."* The putting of widow-marriage in the same category with inter-caste marriage shows that it was still in existence, though its total abolition was a thing to be devoutly wished.† Gautama does not prohibit it in so many words. Indeed, he acknowledges its existence by admitting the right of the son of a widow by her second husband to inherit one-fourth of his father's property in the absence of ordinary legitimate heirs. According to Vasistha and Vishnu, the son of a married widow by her second husband is fourth in order of preference in the matter of inheritance among the twelve kinds of sons, and is regarded as better than an adopted son (XVII. 18; XV. 7). Certainly such a son is not treated equally with ordinary sons. He is of that degraded class who must not be invited to a funeral repast (Gaut. XV. 18). Vasistha lays

* Cf. Vatsyayana's Kamasutra I. 5. 3. "Intercourse with a woman of lower caste and a twice-married woman is *neither desirable nor forbidden*" (न शिष्टो न प्रतिषिद्धः).

† Cf. Manu III. 181, where a Brahman born of a remarried widow is still called a Brahman and is regarded only as much degraded as a Brahman living by trade.

down the following rules regarding the remarriage of women. "If the betrothed of a maiden die after she has been promised to him verbally and by a libation of water, but before she was married with the recitation of sacred texts, she belongs to her father alone. *If a damsel has been abducted by force, and not been wedded with sacred texts, she may lawfully be given to another man, she is even like a maiden.* (cf. Baudh. IV. 1. 17). If a damsel at the death of her husband had been merely wedded by the recitation of sacred texts, and if the marriage had not been consummated, she may be married again. (cf. Baudh. IV. 1. 18).* The wife of an emigrant shall wait for five years. After five years have passed, she may go to seek a husband . In this manner (after the death of her husband) a wife of the Brahman caste who has issue shall wait five years and one who has no issue, four years; a wife of the Kshatriya caste who has issue, five years, and one who has no issue, three years; a wife of the Vaisya caste who has issue, four years, and one who has no issue, two years; a wife of the Sudra caste who has issue, three years, and one who has no issue, one year.... But while a member of her family is living, she shall certainly not go to a stranger (for marrying)." (XVII).

* "बलाच्चेत्प्रहृता कन्या मन्त्रैर्यदि न संस्कृता ।
अन्यस्मै विधिवद्देया यथा कन्या तथैव सा ॥
पाणिग्राहे मृते बाला केवलं मन्त्रसंस्कृता ।
सा चेदक्षतयोनिः स्यात्पुनः संस्कारमर्हतीति ॥"

Kautilya also declares in the same fashion. On the death of her husband a woman, wishing to lead a virtuous life, shall at once receive not only her endowment money and jewellery but also the balance of dowry due to her. If she is desirous of a second marriage she shall be given on the occasion of her marriage whatever her father-in-law or her husband or both had given to her. If a widow marries any man other than that selected by her father-in-law, she shall forfeit whatever had been given to her by her father-in-law and her husband... *If a husband is of bad character, or is long gone abroad, or is guilty of high treason, or is dangerous to his wife, or has become outcast, or has lost virility, he may be abandoned by his wife...* If the wife of an absent husband lacks maintenance and is not taken care of by the well-to-do kinsmen of her husband, she may remarry any one, whom she likes and who is in a position to maintain her and save her from misery. . Childless wives belonging to Sudra, Vaisya, Kshatriya or Brahman caste should wait for a year for their husbands who have gone abroad for a short time. Wives with children should wait in such cases for more than a year. If they are provided with maintenance they should wait for twice the length of that period. If they are not so provided their kinsmen should maintain them for four or eight years. Then the kinsmen should leave them to marry after taking from them what

had been given to them at the time of marriage."* "From mutual enmity divorce (moksha) may be obtained. If a man desires divorce he shall return to her whatever she was given on the occasion of her marriage. If a woman desires divorce, she shall forfeit her claim to her property. The first four kinds of marriage cannot be dissolved on the ground of mutual hatred." (Artha. III. 2-4).

It is difficult to say whether the hard life prescribed for widows by later law-givers had come into fashion. From the silence of the Sutra-writers on this point, when they could have easily inserted one sentence in the chapter on Brahmacharya to include widows also as persons intended to observe those rules, as is done by later law-givers,† it is inferred that more merciful treatment was the lot of the widows of the time. This supposition gains further confirmation from the proscription of a rigid life for a short duration only in the case of those widows who seek children by Niyoga. "The widow of a deceased person shall sleep on the ground during six months, practising religious vows and abstaining from pungent condiments and salt. After the completion of

* "ह्रस्वप्रवासिनां शूद्रवैश्यक्षत्रियब्राह्मणानां भार्याः संवत्सरोत्तरं कालमाकांक्षेरन् अप्रजाताः संवत्सराधिकं प्रजाताः। प्रतिविहिताः द्विगुणं कालं अप्रतिविहिताः सुखावस्था बिभृयुः परं चत्वारि वर्षाण्यष्टौ वा ज्ञातयः ततो यथादत्तमादाय प्रमुञ्चेयुः॥ ...कुटुम्बर्द्धिलोपे वा सुखावस्थैर्विमुक्ता यथेष्टं विन्देत।"

† "ताम्बूलाभ्यञ्जनञ्चैव कांस्यपात्रे च भोजनम्। यतिश्च ब्रह्मचारी च विधवा च विवर्जयेत्॥" इति प्रचेताः।

six months she shall bathe... Then her father ...shall appoint her to raise issue to her deceased husband." (Vasistha XVII. 55-56). "A widow shall avoid during a year the use of honey, meat, spirituous liquor, and salt, and sleep on the ground. Maudgalya declares that she shall do so during six months. After the expiration of that time she may, with the permission of her Gurus, bear a son to her brother-in-law, in case she has no son." (Baudh. II. 2. 4. 7-9). There is no such regulation for other times. Hence there must have been little encouragement to them to put an end to their miserable lives by Suttee. This, again, is a matter on which the Grihya Sutra-writers, who do not leave any ceremony of life untouched, are singularly silent. While minutest details are given about the cremation ceremony and the purificatory rites consequent upon bereavement, no directions are given as to how Suttee is to be performed or what is to be done for a woman thus burnt.*

Yet there is one significant passage which indicates that the performance of Suttee was gone through symbolically, which in ordinary cases did not have a tragic end, like the human

* Such directions are found in profusion in the later law-books, e.g.—

ऋग्वेदवादात् साध्वी स्त्री न भवेदात्मघातिनी । त्र्यहाशौचे निवृत्ते तु श्राद्धं प्राप्नोति शास्त्रवत् ॥ इति ब्रह्मपुराणे । पृथक्चितिं समारुह्य न विप्रा गन्तुमर्हति । अन्यासामेव नारीणां स्त्रीधर्मोऽयं परः स्मृतः ॥ इति उशनाः । बालापत्याश्च गर्भिण्यो ह्यदृष्टऋतवस्तथा । रजस्वलाराजसुते नारोहन्ति चितां शुभे ॥ इति बृहन्नारदीयम् ।

sacrifice, which though actually performed at one time in some sacrifices had, as we know, by the time of the Yajurveda and the S. P. and Tait. Brahmanas, become purely emblematic. "After sacrificial grass and a black antelope's skin with the hair outside have been spread out on the pile of fuel they place the dead body thereon... To the north of the body they place the wife of the deceased... Her brother-in-law, being a representative of her husband, or a pupil of her husband, or an aged servant, should cause her to rise from that place with the verse, 'Arise, O wife, to the world of life' of the Rigveda (X. 18. 8)" (Asvalayana Grihya Sutra IV. 2). There is no mention any where, whether in the Rigveda or in the Sutras, that this verse was addressed to a pregnant woman, who, according to later authors, was exempted from this horrible fate. Originally the verse was addressed only by the brother-in-law who ordinarily married or cohabited with the widow. Later, when the remarriage of widows and the practice of Niyoga had become objects of disapproval the recital of the verse lost its meaning and so a substitute for brother-in-law might be used. The only one verse in the Rigveda which according to more recent commentators and law-givers (vide Raghunandana's Suddhitattvam) recommends the rite of Suttee is X. 18. 7: "Let these women, who are not widowed, who have good husbands, applying the collyrious butter to

their eyes enter; without tears, without disease, and full of ornaments, let these wives first enter the house."* The doubt is as to whom the verse was addressed, whether to the recently widowed wives of the dead husband ready to accompany him by entering into fire to the heavenly home, or to the assembled young women around ready to go back home from the cremation ground. The bearing of this verse is more clearly understood from the Asvalayana Grihya Sutra IV. 6. 11-12, which states, "The young women belonging to the house should, with each hand separately, with their thumbs and fourth fingers, with young Darbha blades, salve their eyes with butter and throw the Darbha blades away, turning their faces away. The performer of the ceremony should look at them, while they are salving themselves, with the verse, "Let these women, who are not widowed, etc."

Yet we may believe that the custom of Suttee, inspite of the general silence of the Sutra-writers, persisted among certain sections of the people, especially among the princely class (Zimmer, Alt. Leb. 331). In many savage communities we find the existence of a custom of sacrificing wives and slaves at the time of burial of a dead chieftain with

* "इमा नारीरविधवाः सुपत्नीरांजनेन सर्पिषा संविशंतु ।
अनश्रवोऽनमीवाः सुरत्ना आरोहंतु जनयो योनिमग्रे ॥"

the intention of securing to him the same service and ministration in the other world as he had been used to in this world. "We read in Herodotus (V. 5) that amongst the Thracians it was usual, after the death of a man, to find out who had been the most beloved of his wives, and to sacrifice her upon his tomb. Mela (II. 2) gives the same as the general custom of the Getae. Herodotus (IV. 71) asserts a similar fact of the Scythians, and Pausanius (IV. 2) of the Greeks, while our own Teutonic mythology is full of instances of the same feeling." (Max Muller, Hist. of Anc. Sans. Lit. p. 48). From the prevalence of this custom among several branches of the Indo-Germanic race in Asia and Europe we may expect to find it existing in some form or other among the early Indo-Aryans. But the Vedic literature, earlier and later, contains very few traces of such a custom. This luxury was probably enjoyed in earlier times by the princes generally, with whom the custom sometimes became a necessity in view of the miserable lot to which the wives of a slain chieftain were consigned by the victor. Almost all the cases of Suttee recorded in the Epic and Pauranic literature occurred in the families of kings and generals. But so rare was the custom even in the time of the Epics, not to speak of the earlier Vedic period, that no Suttee took place after the carnage of Kurukshetra in which over a million combatants

are said to have been killed and in which all the princely families of India took part. The widowed women of the Kuru family are seen duly performing the Sraddha ceremonies after the cremation of the dead bodies (Stri, 27). The Suttee was regarded as exception rather than the rule and was rarely performed in Brahman families in those days. The fragmentary Greek accounts regarding Suttee leave an impression that it was a peculiar custom with certain military tribes of North-western India and not a general custom throughout the country in the 4th century B. C. "A peculiar custom is mentioned as existing among the Kathaians—that the husband and wife choose each other, and that the wives burn themselves along with their deceased husbands." (Diodoros XVII. 91). A similar notice of the custom is made in connection with Taxila along with other "strange and unusual customs."

To those who would not agree to accept as a later interpolation the passage XXV. 14. in Vishnu Dharmasutra which states that the duty of a woman is "after the death of her husband to preserve her chastity or to ascend the pile after him," it may be said that the gradual abolition of widow-marriage and the custom of Niyoga together with the raising of the standard of chastity and morality made it more difficult for the guardians of society to prevent moral lapses in widowed women, and

so the Brahman legislators thought of reviving or rather legalising the dreadful custom, which in the primitive stage of Aryan society had been generally prevalent, and which, inspite of the attempts of the Brahman sages in the Vedic period to treat it as a symbolical function and thus to discontinue the actual execution, had persisted among certain sections of the people. The introduction of Suttee is only a logical corollary to the total prohibition of widow-marriage and the maintenance of a high standard of womanly chastity.

A bad substitute for the marriage of widows was Niyoga. It is natural to expect that with the growth of a stricter standard of morality during the Upanishad and Sutra periods this survival from the earlier days of a polyandrous society would be abolished. Puritan voices of protest, like that of Aupajandhani in the previous period and of Apastamba (II. 10. 27)* in the Sutra period, were raised against this violation of the sanctity of conjugal relation. But so long-established was the custom, so eager was the Indo-Aryan to have a son, legitimate or otherwise, for offering oblations after death, and such was the harshness involved in the prohibition of the marriage of a childless widow, especially when the widow could in many cases not inherit her husband's

* "नियमारम्भणो हि वर्षीयानभ्युदय एवमारम्भणादपत्यात् ।"

property, that Niyoga could not be easily suppressed. It was the only consolation left to a young widow or the wife of a physically unfit husband. The Mahabharata through Svetaketu* makes Niyoga compulsory for women if required by their husbands. According to Vasistha and Vishnu a son produced by Niyoga is inferior in quality only to the self-begotten son but superior to all other kinds of sons (XVII. 14; XV. 3). Both Baudhayana (II. 2. 4. 9) and Gautama support it. "A woman whose husband is dead and who desires offspring may bear a son to her brother-in-law. Let her obtain the permission of her Gurus and let her have intercourse during the proper season only. On failure of a brother-in-law she may obtain offspring by cohabiting with a Sapinda, a Sagotra, a Samanapravara, or one who belongs to the same caste (cf. Kautilya's Arthasastra III. 6). Some declare that she shall cohabit with nobody but a brother-in-law. She shall not bear more than two sons. The child belongs to him who begat it, except if an agreement to the contrary has been made. And the child begotten at a living husband's request on his wife belongs to the husband. But if it was begotten by a stranger it belongs to the latter, or to both the natural father and the husband of the mother. But being reared

* Svetaketu himself was born through the Niyoga connexion between his mother and a disciple of his father (Santi 34).

by the husband it belongs to him. A wife must wait for six years (before seeking to produce a child by Niyoga), if her husband has disappeared.... The wife of a Brahman who has gone abroad for the purpose of studying must wait twelve years." (Gaut. XVIII. 4-17).

Legal rights of women

As regards inheritance the general rule still was, as in the earlier Vedic age, that women were incapable of holding properties (Baudhayana II. 3. 46). Rather women themselves were regarded as properties which, like cattle and land, could not be claimed by adverse users (Gaut. XII. 39; Vasistha XVI. 18). So long as women enjoyed the liberty of widow-marriage and Niyoga they had always either a husband or a son to feed them. But with the increasing restriction of widow-marriage and Niyoga some provision must be found for the widow. Her right to retain her ornaments and the wealth which she might have received from her relations was first acknowledged (Apastamba II. 6. 14. 9; Vishnu XVII. 18), and gradually her right to inherit a share of her husband's property in default of a male issue or an appointed daughter (Gaut. XXVIII. 21). According to Vishnu, "the wealth of a man who dies without male issue goes to his wife, and on failure of her, to his daughter." (XVII. 4-5). Kautilya declares that "if one has only daughters, they shall have his property" (Artha. III. 5). This

was no doubt an advance in the position of women since the early Vedic times.

One point is worthy of mention here in comparing the position of women during the Sutra period with that of their less fortunate sisters at the present day. This is the right of protection of a wife against the tyranny of her husband. "No division of property takes place between husband and wife; for, from the time of marriage, they are united in religious ceremonies." (Ap. II. 6. 14. 16). "He who has unjustly forsaken his wife shall put on an ass's skin, with the hair turned outside, and beg in seven houses, saying, 'give alms to him who forsook his wife.' That shall be his livelihood for six months." (Ap. I. 10. 28. 19). "A husband who forsakes a blameless wife shall be punished like a thief." (Vishnu V. 163). Even an unchaste wife was entitled to maintenance, as Gautama says, "A wife who violates her duty to her husband; being guarded, she shall receive food." (XXII. 35). A wife could be abandoned only for highest offences, such as for yielding herself to her husband's pupil or to his Guru, for attempting the life of her husband, for committing adultery with a man of a degraded caste, and for drinking spirituous liquor (Vasistha XXI. 10-11). "*A wife, though tainted by sin, whether she be quarrelsome, or have left the house, or have suffered criminal force, or have fallen into the hands of thieves, must not be*

abandoned; to forsake her is not prescribed by the sacred law. Let him wait for the time of her courses; by her temporary uncleanness she becomes pure.... Those versed in the sacred law state that there are three acts only which make women outcasts, viz. the murder of the husband, slaying a learned Brahman, and the destruction of the fruit of their womb." (Vasistha XXVIII). The Mahabharata (Santi 34) states that an incorrigibly unchaste wife should be kept in a separate house and that the husband should avoid cohabitation and sharing the common table with her. By this punishment the wife would be purified of her guilt, and no higher punishment was necessary. "If a woman either brings forth no male child or is barren, her husband has to wait for eight years before marrying another woman. In case of violating this rule he shall have to pay her not only sulka, her stridhana, and an adequate compensation and subsistence, but also a fine of 24 panas to the government."... Every one of the wives of a man can claim his companionship at particular periods whether he likes her or not, the penalty being a fine of 96 panas for non-compliance...."If a husband be of bad character, or long gone abroad, or a traitor to the king, or likely to endanger the life of the wife, or an outcast, or impotent, he may be abandoned by his wife."* (Artha. III, 2).

* "नीचत्वं परदेशं वा प्रस्थितो राजकिल्बिषी ।
प्राणाभिहन्ता पतितस्त्याज्यः क्लीबोऽपि वा पतिः ।"

APPENDIX

The following practices, which were regarded as good or unobjectionable in earlier times but which should not be followed in the modern age, are mentioned in the Brihannaradiya and Aditya Puranas. "Sea-voyage, inter-caste marriage, levirate, slaughter of cattle in honour of distinguished guests and at funeral rites, remarriage of women, taking to asceticism in old age, continuance of Brahmacharya for a long time, putting an end to life in old age, killing a Brahman enemy in a duel, shortening the period of ceremonial impurity for the sake of study, making penances ending in death, acknowledgment of any sons excepting those begotten by self and the adopted ones, taking the food of even select Sudras such as the domestic servant, cowherd, family friend and cultivating partner, employment of Sudra cooks by Brahmans, making sacrifices with human or bovine victims, etc., etc."

Brihannaradiya Purana: समुद्रयात्रास्वीकारः कमण्डलुविधारणं। द्विजानामसवर्णासु कन्यासूपयमस्तथा॥ देवरेण सुतोत्पत्तिर्मधुपर्के पशोर्वधः। मांसादनं तथा श्राद्धे वानप्रस्थाश्रमस्तथा॥ दत्तायाश्चैव कन्यायाः पुनर्दानं वरस्य च। दीर्घकालं ब्रह्मचर्यं नरमेधाश्वमेधकौ॥ महाप्रस्थानगमनं गोमेधश्च तथा मखम्। इमान् धर्मान् कलियुगे

वर्ज्ज्यानाहुर्म्मनीषिणः ॥ Aditya Purana: दीर्घकालं ब्रह्मचर्य्यं धारणञ्च कमण्डलोः। देवरेण सुतोत्पत्तिर्दत्तकन्या प्रदीयते ॥ कन्यानामसवर्णानां विवाहश्च द्विजातिभिः। आततायिद्विजाग्र्याणां धर्म्मयुद्धेन हिंसनम् ॥ वानप्रस्थाश्रमस्यापि प्रवेशो विधिदेशितः। वृत्तस्वाध्यायसापेक्षमघसङ्कोचनं तथा ॥ प्रायश्चित्तविधानञ्च विप्राणां मरणान्तिकं। संसर्गदोषः पापेषु मधुपर्के पशोर्वधः ॥ शूद्रेषु दासगोपालकुलमित्रार्द्धसीरिणाम्। भोज्यान्नता गृहस्थस्य तीर्थसेवातिदूरतः ॥ ब्राह्मणादिषु शूद्रस्य पक्वतादिक्रियापि च। भृग्वग्निपतनञ्चैव वृद्धादिमरणं तथा ॥ एतानि लोकगुप्त्यर्थं कलेरादौ महात्मभिः। निवर्त्तितानि कर्म्माणि व्यवस्थापूर्व्वकं बुधैः ॥ (Raghunandana, Udbahatattvam).

CHAPTER VI

Verifications from non-Brahmanical writings.

A. Caste in the Early Buddhist Literature (*c.* B.C. 500—300)

Apparent unorthodoxy in society

It would be a mistake to expect as highly developed a system of caste revealed in the Buddhist literature as that in the Brahmanical law-books. Firstly, we must not forget that the stronghold of Brahmanism lay in the Madhya-desha, or the heart of Aryavarta, where the Brahmanical rules of society were originally developed and were observed in their strictest form. As the Brahmanical culture spread eastward it became more and more diluted, and so the social rules in the eastern provinces, Kashi, Koshala, Videha and Magadha, the birth-place and stronghold of Buddhism and early Buddhist literature, were more lax even in a later period than those obtaining in the more western provinces. Secondly, the authors of the Buddhist texts were generally Buddhist monks, who were unsympathetic, if not hostile, to the Brahmanical rules of life, and who can not be expected to lay stress on those factors in the life of the people which the Brahman writers took so much care to foster and

emphasise. Hence deviations from the standard of life fixed by the Brahmans would not be regarded with disapproval or as unusual by the Buddhist writers. Thirdly, unlike the writers of the law-books, many of the Buddhist writers before they had become monks, belonged like Buddha himself to the Kshatriya caste, and even in their monkhood they could not divest themselves of the jealousy which a Kshatriya naturally felt at the pretensions of superiority of the Brahmans. Thus it would be an error to think that the Kshatriya caste was higher than the Brahman in the social scale simply because the Kshatriya often finds precedence in the list of the four varnas as mentioned by the Buddhist writers. These differences between Buddhist and Brahman writers have led some scholars to erroneously believe that the society represented in the early Buddhist literature was earlier in age and hence less developed from the point of view of caste than that described by the authors of the Sutras. Few would nowadays agree with Rhys Davids in his statement in *Buddhist India* that "it is no more accurate to speak of caste at the Buddha's time in India than it would be to speak of it as an established institution, at the same time, in Italy or Greece."

Caste ideas too deep-rooted

The first point to note in the Buddhist literature is that, however much Buddha and

his disciples might try to belittle the importance of birth and exalt the importance of virtue as the means to salvation, the concept of the fourfold, or rather fivefold, division of society had become long and deeply ingrained in the minds of men, and was a real force which was little shaken by Buddha's appearance. Thus inspite of the teachings that "Khattiya, Brahman, Vessa, Sudda, Chandala and Pukkasa can all be virtuous and self-restrained and attain Nirvana; among them, when they have attained peace of the soul, there is no one who is better and no one who is worse" (Uddalaka Jataka), that "a man does not become a Brahman by his platted hair, by his family, or by birth, in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahman" (Dhammapada XXVI); that "not by birth does one become an outcast, not by birth does one become a Brahman; by deeds one becomes an outcast, by deeds one becomes a Brahman" (Suttanipata, Vasalasutta);* when Buddha, in the Tittira Jataka, put the question, "Who

*Cf. Mahabharata, III. 313: Yaksha: "Tell me, O King, of what does Brahmanhood really consist, of descent, of conduct, of the study of the Veda, or of learning?"

Yudhisthira. "Listen, dear Yaksha; Brahmanhood is not based on descent, the study of the Veda, or on learning. Character no doubt is the basis of Brahmanhood The Brahman should maintain above all his character by all means .. A man without character, though he may have learnt all the four Vedas, is not better than a Sudra. He who offers the Agnihotra or fire-sacrifice and at the same time curbs his senses is known to be a Brahman."

deserves to have the best quarters, the best water, the best food?" he received from some of his disciples the replies, "the monk of the Brahman caste," "the monk of the Khattiya caste," and so on, showing that in the opinion even of the monks caste distinctions had real value.

Degeneration of Brahman in the East

When the caste system had been developing in the Eastern Punjab and the Upper Gangetic valley, the Brahmans to a great extent formed a homogeneous class, bound together by the consciousness of being the premier caste, the only one enjoying the privilege of acting as priest at a sacrifice, and by the observance of certain customs with a view to preserve purity of blood and ceremonial cleanliness. There might have been occasional departures from the fixed standard of life, but they were not general. As in the course of time the number of Brahmans increased, deviations became more frequent, and Brahmans might be found in many non-Brahmanical professions and with non-Brahmanical habits. Yet in the Middle Country the homogeneity of the Brahman caste was not altogether lost. But conditions were different from the beginning in the eastern provinces dealt with in the early Buddhist writings. When those lands were Aryanised the Brahman colonists, being away from their parent society in the Middle Country and falling

under the strong influences of the non-Aryan environment, could not live up to the orthodox standard of life, and hence became more and more degenerate. Moreover, when the non-Aryan tribes, who could not be subdued in the eastern countries, were bodily taken into the Aryan society, it is not unreasonable to believe that many of them, especially the priestly members of the non-Aryan communities, gained admission into the Brahman caste. The degeneration which naturally set in among the descendants of the Brahman colonists from the west was accelerated and completed by this mixture with non-Aryan Brahmans.

The degeneration of the Brahmans in the eastern provinces is marked by the fact that in the Jatakas a certain superiority is attached to the Brahmans "belonging to the north," i.e. the Kuru-Panchala land. In the Mangala Jataka a northern Brahman is pitted against a worldly native Brahman. In the Maha-supina Jataka a northern Brahman exposes the frauds practised upon the king by the Brahmans in his service. The result of the degeneration is that Brahmans were to be found in all walks of life and in the practice of thoroughly un-Brahmanical observances in the eastern countries in early Buddhist times The Dasabrahmana Jataka gives a list of ten classes of Brahmans—physician, messenger, tax-collector, wood-cutter, tradesman, cultivator, shepherd, butcher, military guard,

hunter,—who, though Brahmans by birth, are not worthy of being called Brahmans. In the Kasibharadvaja Sutta a Brahman scion of the famous Bharadvaja family says to Buddha: "I, O Sraman, both plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat, thou also shouldst plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, thou shouldst eat (and not by begging alms)." In the Jatakas we come across Brahman physicians, Brahman soldiers (Sarabhanga Jataka), Brahman cultivators (Somadatta Jataka), Brahman tradesmen (Gagga Jataka), Brahman shepherds (Dhumakari Jataka), Brahman carpenters (Phandana Jataka), and even Brahman hunters (Chulanandiya Jataka). One of the most important of the Brahmanical professions represented in the Jataka literature was that of dream-reading, averting the effects of evil dreams, and fortune-telling, which enabled them to practise deception on a large scale, as described in the Nakkhatta, Asilakkhana and Kunala Jatakas. Alongside with this there was the kindred profession of magic and demon-worship, as in the Junha Jataka and Vedabbha Jataka, which makes the Brahmans of the time to a certain extent resemble the witch-doctors among savage races. Of course, the picture of the evil lives of the Brahmans in the Jatakas is much overdrawn, being painted by jealous Buddhist monks. But there cannot be any doubt about the depraved conduct and

degrading occupations of many Brahmans in the country whose existences are acknowledged even in the Brahman law-books.

Brahmans still a superior caste

At the same time we find that there were many Brahmans who lived according to the orthodox standard of life. We have glimpses of the fourfold life of a Brahman as a pupil, householder, ascetic and hermit. The chief study of a Brahman was "the three Vedas" and "the eighteen sciences." The Buddhist householders showed reverence to Brahmans as well as Buddhist Sramans (Mahilamukha and Mudulakkhana Jatakas). Even such a zealous Buddhist monarch as Asoka included in his inscriptions the respectful conduct towards "Brahmans and Sramans" among the practices of Dharma which should be observed by the people. The ideal of a true Brahman is high not only in Brahmanical literature but in early Buddhist writings. Thus the Dhammapada declares, "A true Brahman goes scatheless, though he has killed father and mother and two valiant kings, though he has destroyed a kingdom with all its subjects" (ch. XXI), and devotes a whole chapter (XXVI) to the description of the qualities required to make a true Brahman. "No one should attack a Brahman, but no Brahman if attacked should let himself fly at his aggressor! Woe to him who strikes a Brahman, more woe to him who

flies at his aggressor." (XXVI). In the Vasalasutta the following saying is attributed to Buddha: "Whosoever by falsehood deceives either a Brahman or a Sraman or any other mendicant, let him be an outcast." In the Chavaka Jataka we find the high esteem in which a Brahman teacher was held even in the eastern Buddhistic lands, and teachers as a rule were of the Brahman caste in the Jatakas. The Brahman Sela of the Selasutta, Suttanipata, was perfect in the three Vedas, vocabulary, etymology, Itihasa, metre, grammar, controversy, and taught three hundred young men. So is Bavari of the Vatthugatha, Suttanipata. Brahmans like Sundarika Bharadvaja of the Suttanipata regularly made offerings to the fire.

Birth basis of caste

Inspite of such differences in professions and practices among the Brahmans they still formed a caste, which depended on birth alone. There is no instance in the literature of this period of one being promoted to the Brahman caste from a lower one. The case of Uddalaka cannot be cited, he being the son of a Brahman father and non-Brahman mother, and in those days the child of a mixed marriage could under certain circumstances take the rank of his father. A more specific case is mentioned in the Ambatthasutta (Digha Nikaya) where the Krishnayana Brahman clan

is said to be descended from a slave girl of a Kshatriya king. But there, too, the event had happened long before the time of Gautama Buddha, and the founder of the clan might have lived at a time when it was possible for Satyakama Jabala, the son of a slave woman, to enter into the Brahman order. The great force with which Gautama Buddha preached against caste distinctions based on birth and the numerous occasions when he was heckled on the subject and had to admonish his disciples prove the deep-rooted nature of these institutions and the convictions of the age. The story of Matanga in the Vasalasutta shows that one born in a lower caste could by his virtues reach the highest fame in this world and the highest heaven after death but not become a Brahman in this birth, while a Brahman does not seem to lose his caste by committing sinful deeds. "There was a Chandala of the Sopaka caste, well-known as Matanga. This Matanga reached the highest fame, such as was very difficult to obtain, and many Kshatriyas and Brahmans went to serve him. He having mounted the vehicle of the gods, and entered the high road that is free from dust, having abandoned sensual desires, went to the world of Brahma. His birth did not prevent him from being reborn in the Brahma world; on the other hand, there are Brahmans, born in the family of preceptors, friends of the hymns of the Vedas, who are

continually caught in sinful deeds, and are to be blamed in this world, while in the coming world hell awaits them; birth does not save them from hell nor from blame." This emphasis on the worthlessness of the caste system while admitting its inexorable existence from which there is no escape in this world is made clear in the Silavimamsa Jataka: "Birth and caste cause conceit; verily is virtue the highest; learning has no value for him who does not possess virtue. Khattiya, Brahman, Vessa, Sudda, Chandala and Pukkasa will be all equal in the world of the gods, if they have acted virtuously here. Of no value are the Vedas, of no value is birth or caste *for the future world*, only one's own virtue brings him happiness in the next world." The statement put in the mouth of Ambattha that the child of a Kshatriya father and Brahman mother could take the rank of his mother while the child of a Brahman parent by a Kshatriya mother would not be accepted as a Kshatriya, is simply meant to make the Brahmans inferior as a caste to the Kshatriyas, and certainly does not represent the true state of things in the society of the period. On the other hand, a Brahman does not appear to lose caste by following a non-Brahmanical profession. Though an ideal was sought to be set up by stating that the caste was to be determined by profession, the actual state of things

was represented when Bharadvaja in the Vasettha Sutta maintained that when any body was born of Brahman parents without any blemish up to the seventh ancestor, he was ipso facto a Brahman, or in other words that a Brahman was to be known by birth and not conduct or profession.

Relations between Brahman and Kshatriya

As in the Vedic so in the Buddhist literature we find closer relations between the two higher orders, who stood in sharp distinction from the lower orders. Buddha is said to have stated that of the four classes, Khattiya, Brahman, Vessa and Sudda, the first two stand in the front rank in the matter of receiving salutes, seats, respects and services (Kannakathala Sutta). The Lalita Vistara (ch. III), like the Nidanakatha in the introduction to the Jatakas, records an old tradition when it states, "The Bodhisattva was not born in lower castes... He has appeared only in two castes, Brahman and Kshatriya. When the Brahmans are held in high esteem in the world he appears in Brahman families; when the Kshatriyas are greatly esteemed he is born in Kshatriya families. Nowadays, the monks hold the Kshatriyas in the highest esteem; therefore, the Bodhisattvas appear in the Kshatriya caste." In the Buddhist literature the premier position in society is generally assigned to the Kshatriyas instead of the

Brahmans. "Even when a Khattiya has fallen into the lowest depths, he is still the best and the Brahmans are low." "The Khattiya is considered the highest by men who attach value to family." (Digha Nikaya III). This is due partly to the fact that the Buddhist writers were ill-disposed towards Brahmanism, and partly to the actual superiority of the ruling class in general and the degraded condition of the Brahmans in the eastern provinces.) The Khattiya of the Pali texts corresponds to the Vedic Rajanya, and is applied to the princes and their kinsmen only and not to the warriors in general who are called Jodhas or Balakayes. (The Kshatriyas attached great importance to purity of blood and would not regard even the son of a Kshatriya by a Brahman wife as a true-born Kshatriya (Digha Nikaya III. 1. 24).) Hence the oft-repeated expression, *matapitusu Khattiya*, i.e. a Kshatriya both by father and mother. Again, the princes of the period showed as much zeal as the Brahmans in the study of the Vedas and other Shastras, and many of them went to study at the famous university of Taxila. In the Jatakas the age at which the Kshatriya youth goes to live with a teacher is given as the sixteenth year of life, as in the Dummedha Jataka, which is in accord with the prescribed time limit for studentship among the Kshatriyas in the Sutras. Kings are mentioned even as teachers of the Vedas (Gamanichanda Jataka). They,

too, like the Brahmans often retired to forests in old age (Makhadeva, Chullasutasoma, Kuddala, and Gandhara Jatakas). (Thus, as in the Upanishads, we find in the Pali books that the ruling class was not inferior to the priestly in spiritual culture. Hence because of their temporal power, equality in spiritual culture and pride of birth, together with the inferior type of Brahmans in the eastern provinces, the Kshatriyas might reasonably claim some superiority in the social scale.) In the Sonaka Jataka the king Arindama is so proud of his birth in a family with unmixed Kshatriya blood that he calls Sonaka, the son of a purohita, a man of low birth.

But the priestly functions had become so much separated from the royalty that inspite of the pretensions of the Kshatriyas a Brahman priest or purohita was indispensable for the performance of religious rites even by the king. The exclusiveness of the priestly functions was too long-established and deep-rooted to be much shaken even by Buddhistic ideas and the laxness of the eastern society. The purohita was often the teacher or acharya of the prince in his young age, the principal adviser in his government, and the foreteller and averter of evils of the state by his magic powers, thus corresponding to his position in the Epics. The post of purohita was practically hereditary (Susima Jataka). Besides the duty of performing sacrifices as priests, the

Brahmans also performed the duty of teaching the Shastras. Except in rare cases, the teachers were always Brahmans. An important privilege of a Brahman was to receive gifts. Besides the honorarium which they as teachers might or might not accept from their pupils (as in the Tilamutthi Jataka), the Brahmans often enjoyed the liberality of kings (as in the Somadatta Jataka), which was called *brahmadeya*, and also of the ordinary people, which was called *brahmanavachanaka* (as in the Chitta-sambhuta Jataka). Buddha declares in the Vasalasutta, "Whosoever annoys either a Brahman or a Sraman when meal-time has come and does not give him anything, let one know him as an outcast." Thus the early Buddhist writings practically confirm the description of the Brahman caste as given in the Sutras and concede to the Brahmans the three exclusive privileges of teaching, performing sacrifices for others, and receiving gifts.

Vaisya and Sudra

The words Vessa and Sudda occur very seldom in the Jataka literature and are used only when a theoretical discussion of the caste system is made, and not to mean existing social groups. They are not met with as pure castes like Brahman and Kshatriya. They do not even represent groups of castes, as nowhere it is mentioned whether a member of a particular

professional caste belongs either to the Vaisya varna or Sudra varna. The explanation is that real distinction between Vaisya Aryans and Sudra non-Aryans existed only in the early Vedic society. As early as the period of the Brahmanas, the distinction between the Vaisyas and the Sudras had become much less sharp. If this was so even in the Brahmana period and in the Kuru-Panchala land, it is not strange that the distinction between the two orders became in practice nominal in later times and more so in the eastern countries, though it was always maintained in theory. Hence though the words occur to mean two distinct orders, they do not apply to any existing social groups. On the other hand, the names of different existing castes are mentioned, but not in terms of the traditional fourfold social system. Thus professional castes like the chariot-makers, carpenters, etc., who at one time must have belonged to the Vaisya order, are grouped together in this period with despised castes like the Chandalas, Pukkasas etc., without any reference to racial distinction (Assalayana Sutta; Suttavibhanga Pachittiya II. 2. 1).

Gahapati and Kutumbika

If any social division of the early Buddhist period corresponds to the traditional Vaisya order it is the caste of Gahapati or Grihapati. In these Gahapatis we see a landowning and

mercantile class, who ranked just below the Kshatriya and Brahman castes (Dummedha, Panchaguru and Mahapingala Jatakas). The Gahapatis were present along with the Brahmans and ministers permanently in the retinue of the king. They generally married within their caste. The caste of a Gahapati like that of a Brahman seems to be hereditary, as a Gahapati, who was compelled by fortune to follow an ignoble profession, still remained a Gahapati (Sutano Jataka). Like the Brahmans and Kshatriyas the Gahapatis, at least the richer section called Setthi, too, devoted a part of their life to study, and sometimes in old age became homeless ascetics. Equally with the two higher castes they had a deep contempt for the low-caste peoples. A Setthi's daughter washes her eyes for seeing a Chandala in the Matanga Jataka. Almost synonymous with the word Gahapati is the word Kutumbika in the Jataka literature. The Kutumbikas lived, as we find in the Munika Jataka, both in towns and villages. The Kutumbikas are found to be engaged either in trade (as in the Salaka Jataka), or in money-lending transactions (as in the Suchchaja and Satapatta Jatakas). The merchants engaged themselves not only in inland trade but in distant sea-voyages, which did not in those days cause degradation. The Baveru Jataka contains references to trade with Babylon. The Pandara Jataka relates the story of a

shipwreck in which five hundred tradesmen were drowned. The interdiction of sea-voyage, as mentioned in the Brahmanical law-books, was evidently meant for the Brahmans only, and did not apply to the Vaisyas. According to Baudhayana (I. 1. 2), even the Brahmans in Northern India went to sea and did not thereby lose caste, though the practice was forbidden to the Brahmans of the South.

Serving classes

There were two classes of serving men, hired labourers (bhataka or kammakara) and slaves (dasa). Though we meet with instances here and there of men of higher castes engaging themselves as day-labourers in times of distress, as was the fate of a poor Gahapati in the Sutano Jataka and of three Brahman girls in the Suvannahamsa Jataka, the majority of the hired labourers came from families in which the profession was hereditary, as we find in the Kummasapinda Jataka. However ill-paid and ill-treated they might have been, their lot was better than that of the slaves because they enjoyed some freedom and could transfer their services from one master to another. The slaves could be made from all classes under various circumstances. Thus we find the village superintendent in the Kulavaka Jataka made a slave by the king as punishment for an offence. The Chullanarada Jataka mentions

a village being plundered by robbers and the inhabitants taken away as slaves. Slaves were also acquired by purchase, as in the Vessantara and Nanda Jatakas, and by inheritance, as in the Katahaka Jataka. These accounts agree with the statement of Manu (VIII 415) that slaves are of seven kinds: those who are captured in war (dhvajahrita), those who sell themselves in return for maintenance (bhaktadasa), those who are born of slave parents in the house (grihaja), those who are acquired by purchase (krita), those who are received as gifts (datrima), those who are acquired by inheritance from the father (paitrika), and those who are made slaves by way of punishment (dandadasa). The slaves were sometimes freed by their masters, as in the Sonananda Jataka. In spite of their low status the slaves occupied in society a position in some respects higher than that of the despised artisan castes. They could not be regarded as impure as they had to work for their masters in manifold household duties. The Kusa Jataka describes the work of cooking for the master as belonging to the slaves. In the Silavimamsa Jataka the female slave has to wash the body of her master. Unlike the Brahman writings, the early Buddhist literature does not give the impression that the slaves formed a caste and nowhere are they called by the name of Sudra.

Guild castes in the Jatakas

(With the advance of time and the growing complexities of society the number of professional castes had much increased since the early Vedic period. Thus we come across castes of smith, potter, stone-grinder, ivory-carver, carpenter, garland-maker, barber, fisherman, dancer, drummer, elephant-tamer, etc. Generally these professions were hereditary (Kachchhapa Jataka and Kumbhakara Jataka). To increase the isolation of these guild castes, they occupied separate quarters in cities, and even lived in separate villages of their own.) For instance, the Alinachitta Jataka and the Samuddavanija Jataka speak of carpenters' villages and the Suchi Jataka of smiths' villages. The highly organised state of these groups is proved by the existence of headmen (Jetthakas) who looked to the enforcement of prescribed rules and regulations in their respective groups. Yet there are exceptions which show that the barriers dividing one profession from another were not insurmountable. "A weaver looking on his handicraft as a mere makeshift changes it offhand for that of an archer; a pious farmer and his son, with equally little ado, turn to the low trade of rush-weaving" (Cam. H. I). In the Supparaka Jataka a fisherman takes service as an estimator of the value of precious articles and after a time reverts to his original occupation. Most of these industrial professions

were, as in the Brahman law-books, regarded as lowly and their followers were treated as despised castes. The Suttavibhanga (Pachittiya II. 2) describes the occupations of the basket-maker, the potter, the weaver, the cobbler and the barber as low (hinasippa), and the Venas or manufacturers of bamboo products, the Rathakaras or chariot-makers, the Chandalas, the Nishadas and the Pukkasas as low castes (hinajachcho). The Kusa Jataka places the Vena on the same level with the Chandala. The basket-maker and the flute-maker are spoken of contemptuously in the Takkariya Jataka. In the Bhimasena Jataka the work of a weaver is called low. From the introduction to the Sigala Jataka and the Gangamala Jataka we find that the barber was regarded as of low caste.

Untouchables in Buddhist literature

The Chandalas were the most despised caste of the society. They were not allowed to live within the walls of a town. Even touching or seeing a Chandala caused impurity. In the Matanga Jataka it is related how sixteen thousand Brahmans lost their caste because they, though unknowingly, took food which had been polluted by contact with the leavings of a Chandala's meal. In the Satadhamma Jataka a Brahman commits suicide because he has eaten the leavings from a Chandala's dish. In several Jatakas we find

Brahmans running away to escape pollution by contact with Chandalas. This fear of pollution was not confined to the Brahmans alone. A merchant's daughter washes her eyes with scented water and goes away from the place on seeing two Chandalas (Chitta-sambhuta Jataka). Another Setthi girl does the same thing on seeing a Chandala at Benares (Matanga Jataka). The Chandalas were not only despised and kept isolated from society but were distinguished from the rest of the population by their dress, as in the Matanga Jataka, and also by their speech, as in the Chitta-sambhuta Jataka. So despised were the Chandalas that "contemptuous as a Chandala" was a proverbial expression.

Almost equally despised with the Chandalas were the Pukkasas and Nishadas, who, however, are not so much noticed as their more unfortunate brethren, the Chandalas. According to the Dharmasastras, the occupations of a Chandala are to carry the corpses of men who have no relations or friends, and to execute criminals. As in the earlier writings of the Middle Country which refer to the fivefold division of society, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra, Nishada, in the Buddhist Jataka literature also the social divisions were on similar lines, *viz.*, Khattiya, Brahman, Vessa, Sudda, Chandala, Pukkasa, the last two probably forming a pair. But

soon confusion arose as the number of unclean castes increased. At the same time the authors of the Dharmasastras seeking their authority in the Vedic texts wanted to keep to the original fourfold division of society. So the fifth caste was altogether rejected, the Nishadas, Chandalas, Pukkasas, etc. being classified under mixed or casteless castes (Manu X. 4 et seq.).

Marriage rules in the Jatakas

Though endogamy was the general rule intermarriage between different castes was not unknown. That some Brahmans boasted of descent from Brahmans on both sides for generations back (Digha I. 93) betrays the existence of many Brahmans of mixed descent. Uddalaka (Uddalaka Jataka), though born of a courtesan mother, was accepted as his son and disciple by his Brahman father, the purohita of the king, when he could satisfy him about his identity. In the Kusa Jataka a Brahman marries the childless chief-wife of a king. In the Katthahari Jataka a wood-gatherer girl is installed as the chief queen. In the Bhaddasala Jataka Buddha says to the king of Kosala that "the family of the mother does not matter, the family of the father alone is important." These, however, are exceptions. Everywhere in the Jatakas we meet with efforts to preserve the purity of the family through marriage with one of the same

social group and not to marry below one's rank. When a bride was sought, instructions were given to find out one "of equal social status" (*samana kulato kumarikam anesi*). Pasenadi of Kosala would not retain Vasabhakhattiya as his wife after he had heard of her birth from a slave girl though by a Sakya father (Bhaddasala Jataka). The same story shows that the restrictions of commensality were sufficiently strong to prevent the Sakya father and Vasabhakhattiya from taking food from the same dishes. In the introduction to the Sigala Jataka it is narrated how a barber's son was seized with love for a Lichchhavi girl and wanted to die if he could not marry her. His father tried to dissuade him by saying, "My son, do not fix your desires upon impossible things. You are the son of a barber and hence of low caste, while the Lichchhavi girl is of high birth, being the daughter of a Kshatriya. She is, therefore, no possible match for you. I will find out another girl for you who will be equal to you in caste and family." The barber's son, however, died in grief not attaining the object of his love.

A man of non-Kshatriya parentage, however, could become king and found a dynasty in exceptional circumstances. From the Sachchamkira Jataka we find that a tyrannical king was driven away by the enraged citizens and a Brahman was installed in his

place. The Padanjali Jataka too relates the election of a Brahman as king. In the Nigrodha Jataka the newly-elected king was the son of a beggar woman. In all probability these non-Kshatriya princes married into acknowledged princely families and within a short time were admitted into the Kshatriya caste, though for a time they would be looked down upon by the proud Kshatriyas of old families.

The marriage rules were not very strict, especially among the princely families. In the Mudupani Jataka a king marries his daughter with his nephew. In the Udaya Jataka the king marries his step-sister. According to tradition, Gautama Buddha married his maternal uncle's daughter, and so also King Ajatasatru. The girls were not usually married early, as we know from the Pannika, Asilakkhana and many other Jatakas. Remarriage of widows with or without child was not regarded as unusual. From the Asatarupa Jataka we learn that a king of Kosala killed the king of Benares and made the widowed queen, who was already a mother, his chief queen (aggamahisi). A similar story is related in the Kunala Jataka. According to tradition as preserved in the introduction to the Chandakinnara Jataka, many princes were desirous of marrying the wife of Gautama Buddha, who had already a son then, when he renounced his home and

became an ascetic. In the Uchchhanga Jataka a woman prays for the release of her brother, who along with her husband and son has been sentenced to death, saying that of these three she can get a new husband and a new son but never a new brother, whatever she can do.

Food and Drink in the Jatakas

Mention is made of the slaughter of cows at sacrifices by the people of the time in the Brahmanadhammikasutta. From the Gahapati Jataka we learn that even respectable villagers felt no scruple in eating cow's meat. In the Munika Jataka and Saluka Jataka a Kutumbika (Vaisya) is found entertaining his guests on the occasion of his daughter's marriage with the meat of a fatted pig. In the introduction to the Suvannahamsa Jataka Buddhist nuns are described as being very fond of eating garlic. The Godha Jataka relates the eating of the flesh of lizards by villagers, including a Brahman ascetic. Drinking was indulged in, especially on festive occasions (Tundila and Padakusalamanava Jatakas). Kings sometimes carried their drinking habit to excess, as in the Matanga and Dhammadhaja Jatakas.

B. Caste in Greek accounts (*c* B. C. 300)*

Megasthenes (Arrian and Strabo, tr. by McCrindle) *says that the population of India is divided into seven castes.* [In about B.C. 300 when Megasthenes wrote the Indian social system had left far behind the fourfold division of society into Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra of the Rigvedic age. From the Brahmanas we know that many guild castes and tribal castes had already arisen in society and the Sutra-writers attempted to attribute their origin to cross-connections between the four original castes. Even now when there are about 3000 castes in India the Brahman writers still stick to their traditional idea of fourfold division, and hence the bewildering, and often ludicrous, efforts to classify the vast number of castes in terms of the four varnas. The easiest solution has been to declare that in the Kali or modern age there exist only two castes, Brahman and Sudra. Megasthenes had before him practically the same conditions in society as exist now, only that the intervening centuries have hardened the caste prejudices, have enormously increased the number of castes by the automatic process of splitting up, as discussed in Chapter I, and have added much to the complexities of the problem. Certainly the

* The author's notes are put within [ ] brackets.

number of castes in B.C. 300 was much more than seven, as we know from the Sutras and the early Buddhist literature But Megasthenes living in the court of Chandragupta Maurya could come in contact with few of them, and even among those few he, being a foreigner, could not understand the caste differences in all cases, as, say, between a carpenter and a chariot-maker, or between a Vaisya agriculturist and a Sudra agriculturist. On the other hand, his untutored eyes saw distinction of caste where it did not exist, as, say, between a Brahman priest and a Brahman minister of the king, both functions being allowed by the law-givers of the time to the Brahman caste. No stress, therefore, need be given to the number seven of Megasthenes, excepting that he sought to represent as best as he could the real characteristics of the caste system of his time and refused to follow the Brahmanical tradition of the fourfold division, of which he must have heard during his long stay in India. Thus, as quoted by Arrian, Megasthenes says that "the cultivators cannot inter-marry with the artisans, and *vice versa.* A cowherd cannot become a cultivator, nor an artisan a cowherd." This description agrees exactly with what obtains in the modern Hindu society, but not with the Brahmanical conception of fourfold division.] (1) *The first in rank but smallest in number are the philosophers* [i.e.

Brahmans proper. Their position of head ship in society was well-established and did not escape the notice of Megasthenes]. *They are under no necessity of doing any bodily labour at all, or of contributing from the produce of their labour anything to the common stock. Persons who wish to offer sacrifices or perform other sacred rites employ their services on their private account* [The right of sacrificing as priest belonged exclusively to the Brahman caste], *but the kings employ them on the public account at what is called the Great Assembly, where at the beginning of the New Year all the philosophers repair to the king at the gates.* [Compare the functions of a king's Purohita in Kautilya's Arthasastra Book I. Ch. 9: "Him whose family and character are highly spoken of, who is well-educated in the Vedas and the six Angas, is skilful in reading portents providential or accidental, is well-versed in the science of government, and who is obedient and who can prevent calamities providential or human by performing such expiatory rites as are prescribed in the Atharvaveda, the king shall employ as high priest].

The second [The numberings are arbitrary and not according to rank] *caste consists of the husbandmen, who form the bulk of the population and are of a very mild and gentle disposition* [Traditionally they were Vaisyas but probably there were Sudra husbandmen

as well The profession came to be regarded in later times as degrading even for a Vaisya]. *They are exempted from military service* [like the serfs in Mediaeval Europe, which only widened the gulf of difference between the Kshatriyas and the Vaisya-Sudras], *and cultivate their lands undisturbed by fear. They are neither furnished with arms, nor have any military duties to perform, but they cultivate the soil and pay tribute to the kings and the independent cities. In times of civil war the soldiers are not allowed to molest the husbandmen or ravage their lands: hence, while the former are fighting and killing each other as they can, the latter may be seen close at hand tranquilly pursuing their work,—perhaps ploughing, or gathering in their crops, pruning the trees, or reaping the harvest.* [It is no doubt refreshing to note the highly humanised war laws in India at such an early date Cf. the rules of war in Manu and Mahabharata]. *They do not go to cities, either on business or to take part in their tumults.*

The third caste consists of shepherds and hunters, who alone are permitted to hunt and to keep cattle and to sell beasts of burden or to let them out on hire [Though this was one of the traditional functions of the Vaisyas in earlier times, it eventually became one of the occupations of the Sudras. The Vaisyas gradually withdrew from this profession which was regarded as degrading, and those

of them, who remained attached to it, sunk in later times to the rank of Sudras].

After hunters and shepherds, the fourth caste follows, consisting, he says, of those who work at trades, vend wares, and are employed in bodily labour [Megasthenes ought to have been able to distinguish between the traders who were mostly Vaisyas and the artisans who were either Sudras or degraded Vaisyas. The pursuit of mechanical arts was a legitimate profession of the Sudras in the time of the Sutras]. *Some of these pay taxes and render to the state certain prescribed services. But the armour-makers and ship-builders receive wages and provisions from the kings for whom alone they work.*

The fifth caste consists of fighting-men [Kshatriyas], *who, when not engaged in active service, pass their time in idleness and drinking* [Drinking of spirituous liquor was absolutely forbidden to the Brahmans only].

The sixth caste consists of the inspectors. To them is entrusted the superintendence of all that goes on, and of making reports privately to the king. The city inspectors employ as their co-adjutors the courtesans of the city, and the inspectors of the camp the courtesans who follow the army. The best and most trustworthy men are appointed to fill these offices [When the state was tribal in nature and small in area during the Vedic and Epic periods there was no necessity for

a trained official class. The fighting man, the Kshatriya, was both a soldier and an administrator. But with the growth of imperial and absolute governments in the 4th century B.C. a class of skilled civil officers, as distinguished from ordinary soldiers, arose in society and became a permanent feature of the constitution, like the class of scribes in ancient Egypt. They were no doubt originally chiefly recruited from the governing class, the Kshatriyas, but soon there came a distinction between the warrior Kshatriyas, who comprised the princes and soldiers, and the clerical Kshatriyas, who had given up the profession of fighting and furnished the minor administrative officers of the state. In India it takes a short time for a professional class to develop into a caste, and the writer-caste later became known as Karanas or Kayasthas. Hence Manu (X. 22) describes the Karanas as degraded Kshatriyas, because they, though of Kshatriya descent, had given up the profession of fighting. In later times in some outlying parts of the country, as in Bengal, the degraded Aryan warriors and Aryanised native princes were all lumped together and given the name of Kayastha, which name came to be of universal and fitting application when the right of governing passed away from their hands into those of the Mahomedan conquerors and they were reduced to the rank of clerks and farmers of revenue].

The seventh caste consists of the counsellers and assessors of the king. To them belong the offices of state, the tribunals of justice and the general administration of public affairs [Certainly it was a class and not a caste. The bulk of them were no doubt Kshatriya nobles but there were Brahmans also in the rank (vide infra, Nearchos' account). We know from the Sutras (vide Vishnu III. 70-73) that Brahmans could get appointments as ministers of the crown and judges, in fact, they had a monopoly of certain posts, without losing their caste. This division corresponds to the class of Amatyas or ministers of the Jatakas. About them Fick observes, "From the quotations it is evident that by the expression *amacca* no Khattiya or Brahman is in general to be understood. But to what caste do the ministers belong, if they are not to be looked upon either as Khattiyas or as Brahmans? In my opinion, they do not always belong to the same caste; the *amaccas* form a class by themselves which is generally hereditary, and in consequence of this hereditary character, to which probably a specially developed class consciousness is joined, possesses a certain, though distant, resemblance with a caste."]

No one is allowed to marry out of his own caste, or to exchange one profession or trade for another, or to follow more than one business. An exception is made in favour of a

member of the philosopher caste on account of his superior merit [The fact that a Brahman could marry a non-Brahman woman and follow the profession of a non-Brahman while a non-Brahman was not allowed to marry a Brahman woman and do the work of a Brahman was so glaring that Megasthenes could not fail to notice it. Similar privileges enjoyed by the other castes in the descending order were insignificant in comparison and were not worthy of notice].

The Indians all live frugally, especially when in camp. They care not to congregate in large unruly masses, and they consequently observe good order. Theft is a thing of very rare ocurrence....They lead nevertheless happy lives, being simple in their manners and frugal. They never drink wine except at sacrifices [This was true of the Brahmans only. Kshatriyas drinking at all times has been referred to above]. *Their beverage is prepared from rice instead of barley, and their food is principally a rice-pottage. The simplicity of their laws and their contracts appears from the fact that they seldom go to law. They have no suits about pledges or deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses, but make their deposits and confide in one another. Their houses and property are for the most part unguarded.*

They respect alike truth and virtue [The adverse critics of Hindu ethics would do well to

note it. Manu (X. 63) lays down, "Abstention from injuring, truthfulness, abstention from unlawfully appropriating the properties of others, purity and control of passions, Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for the four castes." It has been cynically said that because the Hindus were always inculcating the virtue of truthfulness, the inference should be that the people were naturally liars which required the frequency and severity of denunciations in the law-books against the vice of lying. Does Megasthenes, who depended upon his personal observation and not on the Brahman law-books, corroborate the thesis of these modern critics?]

They marry many wives [Polygamy was general, but polyandry was forbidden in the law-books] *whom they purchase from their parents, giving in exchange a yoke of oxen* [i.e. the Arsha marriage, which was only one of the eight kinds of marriage]. *Some they marry, hoping to find in them obedient attendants and others for pleasure and to fill their houses with children. The wives prostitute themselves, unless their chastity is enforced by compulsion. Not one is crowned with a garland when sacrificing, or burning incense, or pouring out a libation. They do not stab the victim, but strangle it, so that nothing mutilated, but only what is entire may be offered to the deity* [Compare the remarks on the method of killing animals at sacrifices in

Chapter V.] ...*The same writer says that none of the Indians employ slaves. Onesikritos however says that the custom was peculiar to the people in the country of Mousikanos. A woman who kills a king when drunk is rewarded by becoming the wife of his successor* [Stories are not wanting in the Mahabharata and Puranas about the marriage of the widows of a slain chieftain by the slayer. Megasthenes might have in view the origin of the Nanda dynasty which took place not long before his time].

According to another principle of division, he makes two sects of the philosophers, one of which he calls the Brachmanes [priestly Brahmans] *and the other Garmanes* [Sramans or ascetics]. *The Brachmanes are held in higher estimation, for they agree more exactly in their opinions. From the time of their conception in their womb they are under the care and guardianship of learned men who go to the mother, and under the pretence of using some incantations for the welfare of herself and her unborn child, in reality give her prudent hints and counsels, and the women who listen to them most willingly are thought to be the most fortunate in their offspring* [Megasthenes here refers to the Pumsavana and other pre-natal ceremonies, the meaning of which he failed to understand]. *After their birth the children are under the care of one person after another, and as they advance in years their*

masters are men of superior accomplishments [Confused notions about initiation and Brahmacharya or studentship under a preceptor]. *The philosophers reside in a grove in front of the city within a moderate-sized enclosure. They live in a simple style and lie on pallets of straw and skins. They abstain from animal food and sexual pleasures; and occupy their time in listening to serious discourse and in imparting knowledge to willing ears. But the hearer is not permitted to speak or cough or even to spit, otherwise he is cast out from their society that very day as being a man without self-control* [cf. the detailed regulations for Brahmacharins in the law-books]. *After living in this manner for seven and thirty years* ["The vow of studying the three Vedas under a teacher must be kept for thirty-six years, or for half that time, or for a quarter, or until the student has perfectly learnt them." —Manu III. 1], *each individual retires to his own possessions where he lives in security and under less restraint, wearing robes of muslin and a few gold ornaments on his fingers and in his ears. They eat flesh* [Good Brahmans who obeyed the sacred laws ate meat only at sacrifices. Complete vegetarianism had not yet become the rule even with the priestly class], *but not that of animals which assist man in his labours* [Cow's meat was not excluded from the table at the time, though reverence was steadily growing for the animal.

Note Taxila's present of fatted kine for the feeding of Alexander's army], *and abstain from hot and highly seasoned food. They marry as many wives as they please, with a view to having many children, for from many wives greater advantages are derived. As they do not possess slaves, they need all the more to have at ready command the services of their children* [Megasthenes employed his common sense to find an explanation for the great hankering of the Brahmans for children, especially male. He did not understand that the real reason was not so much to obtain substitutes for slaves as to leave at death enough number to secure continuity of seasonal oblations to the manes]. *The Brahmans do not communicate the knowledge of philosophy to their wives, lest they should divulge any of the forbidden mysteries to the profane, if they became depraved, or lest they should desert them if they became good philosophers* [Megasthenes would have been right if he meant by the word philosophy only ritualistic art, the practice of which was not allowed to women. That women could study philosophy is known from the Upanishads and also from the account of Nearchos noted below]; *for no one who despises alike pleasure and pain, life and death, is willing to be subject to another; and this is the character both of a good man and of a good woman. Their discourse turns most frequently on death. They regard this*

life as the time, so to speak, when the child within the womb becomes mature, and death as a birth into a real and happy life for those that are philosophers. On this account they undergo much discipline as a preparation for death. They consider nothing that befalls men to be either good or bad, for otherwise some persons would not be affected with sorrow and others with joy by the very same things, their notions being as inane as dreams, nor would the same persons be affected at different times with sorrow and joy by the very same things [Many centuries must have rolled on since the beginning of philosophical speculations in the earliest Upanishads before such clear-cut ideas could become deep-rooted in society and speculations had given way to practices]...

Of the Garmanes the most honourable, he says, are those called the Hylobioi [literal translation of the Sanskrit word Vanaprastha]. *They live in the forests, subsist on leaves and wild fruits, wear garments made from the bark of trees, and abstain from wine and commerce with women. They communicate with the kings who consult them by messengers regarding the causes of things, and who through them worship and supplicate the Deity. Next in honour to the Hylobioi are the physicians* [The profession of medicine, the remarks of the Sutra-writers notwithstanding, was not yet a degraded one], *for they apply philosophy to*

the study of the nature of man. They are frugal in their habits, but do not live in the fields. Their food consists of rice and barley-meal, which every one gives who is asked, as well as every one who receives them as guest. By their knowledge of medicine they can make persons have a numerous offspring, and make also the children to be either male or female. They effect cures rather by regulating diet than by the use of medicines. The remedies in most repute are ointments and plasters...... Besides these there are diviners and sorcerers and those who are conversant with the rites and customs relating to the dead, who go about villages and towns begging. Those who are more cultured than these, and mix more with mankind, inculcate the vulgar opinions concerning Hades, which they think conducive to piety and sanctity. Women study philosophy with some of them, but they too abstain from sexual intercourse.

He (Aristoboulos) makes mention of some strange and unusual customs which existed at Taxila... The custom of having many wives prevails here, and is common among other races. He says that he had heard from some persons of wives burning themselves along with their deceased husbands and doing so gladly; and that those women who refused to burn themselves were held in disgrace. The same things have been stated by other writers [Diodoros says (XVII. 91) that the Kathaian

tribe had the custom of widows being burned along with their dead husbands. The specific mention of Taxila and Kathai in connection with the Suttee rite implies that the custom was not universal and that probably it was more prevalent at the time in the north-western part of India which was more exposed to influences from Central Asia. The silence of the Brahman law-givers of the time is significant]. *Nearchos gives the following account of the Sages. Some of the Brachmanes take part in political life, and attend the kings as counsellers. The others are engaged in the study of nature. Women study philosophy along with them, and all lead an austere life* [Contradiction of Megasthenes' statement as noted above].

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